

County Chief Adult Probation and Parole Officers  
Association of Pennsylvania

# **Evidence-Based Practices Strategic Plan**

## **Goal Team #2**

# **Blueprint for EBP Implementation**



**June 2019**



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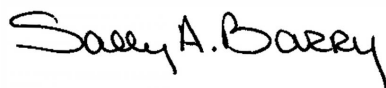
## FOREWORD

On behalf of the Statewide EBP Leadership Team and the County Chief Adult Probation and Parole Officers Association of Pennsylvania (CCAPPOAP), we are pleased to present the *Blueprint for EBP Implementation*. This is the latest in a planned series of reports that will be developed to guide the implementation of evidence-based practices in the Commonwealth's 65 county adult probation and parole departments.

This implementation project is based on the *Evidence-Based Practices Strategic Plan* (2016) developed by CCAPPOAP and its five strategic partners.<sup>1</sup> The plan (available at <http://www.ccappoap.com/public/strategicplan2016.html>) sets forth six goals and numerous related objectives. See Appendix #1 for a summary of the Plan's goals and objectives. Each goal has been assigned to a Goal Team. This Goal Team (#2) is chaired by Chief Robert Williams of Berks County and Director Frank Scherer of Allegheny County.

Goal Team #2 has the responsibility for developing an EBP implementation plan. The first objective under that Goal #2 is to *develop an EBP blueprint/roadmap that describes the fundamental EBP activities to be encouraged in all counties*. In addition to cataloging the EBPs to be implemented, this document provides important contextual information on the history, workload, structure and funding of the county adult probation and parole departments. This information is crucial to understanding the challenges facing the system as we work to implement EBP.

We thank Chief Williams and Director Scherer for their leadership on this document. We also recognize particularly the work of William D. Burrell, our implementation consultant, for developing this document. We hope you find it informative and useful.



Sally A. Barry  
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<sup>1</sup> The strategic partners are the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts, the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.



## **Introduction**

The county adult probation and parole departments (APPD) of Pennsylvania have made a major public commitment to implement evidence-based practices (EBP) to improve the effectiveness of probation and parole services. The County Chief Adult Probation and Parole Officers Association of Pennsylvania (the Association) has engaged key stakeholders, published a multi-year plan and secured seed funding.

This commitment represents a very large and complex organizational change effort in almost every county of the Commonwealth. The EBP model for probation and parole is large and complex, with many components which are interrelated and interdependent. Achieving the significant improvements in outcomes that the model can produce requires full implementation of all of the components. Selecting just a few or implementing them partially or without attention to quality and fidelity will not result in improved performance.

Implementation of EBP requires a great deal of change within a probation and parole department, including organizational culture, staff skills and knowledge, policies and practices, workflow and organizational structure. Managers and executives will need to learn new skills to guide the implementation.

Successful implementation requires commitment and support from internal stakeholders – departmental staff and judges, and external stakeholders – county commissioners, district attorneys, defense counsel, treatment providers and others.

Change of this scale requires a great deal of time – time spent planning and designing, time spent in training for new skills, time spent practicing and mastering those skills, time devoted to new functions required by the model – all of which are essential to successful change. One key aspect of time related to EBP is how long the process will take. Change of this scope and scale will take several years to accomplish. Experts in implementation science suggest that successful implementation can take a minimum of between two and four years. The fact that this implementation is being undertaken not in just one site but across the state in 65 departments clearly suggests an even longer time frame.

The composition of the adult probation and parole system makes the challenges noted above even greater. There are many small departments, located in rural areas. There are few staff in these

departments, limiting the resources available to perform the implementation tasks noted above. These departments cannot afford to have staff away from their caseloads for extended periods to be trained, perhaps to become a trainer or coach, or help with other critical tasks. There are not enough staff to cover caseloads in their absence. Supervisors (where they exist) and executives are performing multiple duties and have precious little time to devote to new tasks related to implementation. Outside of the department, these rural areas have few, if any quality treatment providers and public transportation is scarce if it exists at all. A successful implementation strategy for the state as a whole must accommodate the unique needs of these counties.

The Association and the county APPDs face a daunting challenge. This document is one in a series that will be developed to assist in meeting this challenge. It is designed to serve as a roadmap through unfamiliar territory. It will help the APPDs to get to the destination, which is EBP implemented with quality and producing the desired results. These results include:

- Improved supervision outcomes.
- Reduced offender risk.
- Reduced recidivism.
- Improved public safety.
- Reduced use of state prison and county jail for probation and parole violators.
- Better utilization of public resources.

In another sense, this document can be seen as a blueprint or guide to building an evidence-based agency. For those departments which have already implemented aspects of EBP, it could be a guide to renovation. What should an evidence-based supervision agency look like? How does one go about putting all the myriad pieces together? Additional resources, such as training and technical assistance will be available to assist agency leaders as they begin the implementation process.

The remainder of this document provides an overview of the adult probation and parole system in PA, an overview of EBP for probation and parole, a review of the status of EBP in PA, the implementation blueprint, and a discussion of the implementation process.



## **I. Overview of County Adult Probation and Parole in Pennsylvania**

The adult probation and parole departments play a large and critical role in the criminal justice system at the county and state levels. They support court decision-making with investigations, they implement court orders and they supervise the vast majority (86%) of adults under correctional supervision in the Commonwealth. The departments collect millions of dollars of victim restitution, fines and fees, oversee court-ordered community service, manage electronic monitoring, teach DUI classes, conduct drug tests and more. Adult probation and parole staff play a central role with the many problem-solving courts (drug, treatment, DUI, veterans, mental health) that have been established across the state.

Adult probation and parole has grown into a large and diverse court support operation, providing myriad services to judges, other justice agencies and the community. Few outside the criminal justice system are aware of or appreciate how critical adult probation and parole is to the efficient and effective operation of the criminal justice system.

### **The Structure of Adult Probation and Parole**

Adult probation and parole in Pennsylvania is organized at the county level. There are departments in 65 of the state's 67 counties. The state Board of Probation and Parole provides probation supervision services in the other two counties. In one of those two (Venango), the county Court Supervision Services Office provides supervision for County Intermediate Punishment and ARD cases and oversees electronic monitoring. In a number of counties, adult and juvenile services are combined to some degree. They may be combined in one department or remain separate under one executive, the Chief Probation Officer or Director. Thirty-eight counties have some degree of combined operation or administration, primarily in counties of the fourth class and lower. The larger counties, which carry the majority of the workload, have separate adult and juvenile probation departments. The APPDs report to the local judiciary in the person of the President Judge, assisted by the Court Administrator. The President Judge serves a five year term. In most of the larger counties, the administrative judge of the criminal court provides oversight of adult probation and parole.

This decentralized structure leaves adult probation and parole fragmented. There is no effective state oversight or presence at the local level. While the Board of Probation and Parole has certain

statutory functions related to county adult probation and parole, their primary responsibility and focus is on their core mission of release and revocation decision-making and post-release supervision of inmates released from the state correctional institutions.

Additionally, recent reorganization of the functions of the Board has resulted in the movement of all but the parole release and revocation functions moving to the Department of Corrections. In addition to parole supervision of persons released from the state correctional institutions, this reorganization includes functions and services for county APPDs which were formerly the Board's responsibility. These include:

- The Governor's Advisory Committee on Probation, whose function is to advise the Chairman of the Board of Probation and Parole and Board members on formulating and reviewing standards for probation personnel and probation services in the counties.
- They establish standards for services and audit the counties on their compliance with the standards.
- Collection, compilation and publication of statistical information on probation.
- Administration of the state grant-in-aid program.
- Administration of the Interstate Compact for the transfer of adult offenders to and from the counties from other states.
- Training, including the Basic Training Academy (BTA) which provides entry level training for state parole agents as well as county adult probation and parole officers. Often, separate BTA courses are provided for county staff only and in other instances slots are made available in class with state parole agents. The Board also makes other training programs available to the counties.

The reorganization is still in process and the final details and relationships remain to be developed. Additionally, legislation which addresses some of these functions and responsibilities has been introduced. As a result, county APPDs remain in limbo.

Despite being responsible for the largest share of the Commonwealth's adult correctional caseload, county adult probation and parole effectively has no voice in the state budget process. The Chief Probation Officers – the most informed individuals about the needs of county probation -- are judicial employees and as a result, are restricted from lobbying and other political activities.

No other entity presents and advocates at the state level for the funding needs of county adult probation and parole. That results in the inadequate funding overall, particularly from the state, overly large caseloads, ineffective services and lost opportunities to improve public safety.

### **The Caseload**

The county adult probation departments are responsible for the vast majority of the state’s total adult correctional workload. As with most states, the majority of adult offenders in Pennsylvania are supervised in the community on probation or parole. Pennsylvania has a slightly a larger portion on probation or parole than the national average (75% v. 69%).

**Table 1 – Allocation of Correctional Populations - 2016**

Total adults under correctional supervision	PA	US
Probation & Parole (state & county)	75%	69%
Prisons & Jails	25%	31%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Council of State Governments

Breaking the state probation and parole totals down between the state and the counties, it is clear that the counties carry the overwhelming share (243,000 or 86%) of the community-based caseload. In addition, the caseloads are growing (up 6.7% from 2010 to 2016) and becoming more serious (21% increase in felons from 2003 to 2016).

At the individual caseload level, the situation is a crisis. While there is a critical lack of reliable statewide data on individual caseloads, recent surveys show the statewide average anywhere from 125 to 137 cases per officer. This is more than double the caseload size recommended by the American Probation and Parole Association. (Burrell 2007) It is also more than double the target of 50 per agent established and largely met by the Board of Probation and Parole. (Dunn 2018) APPD caseloads of this size make it impossible for the officers to provide effective supervision.

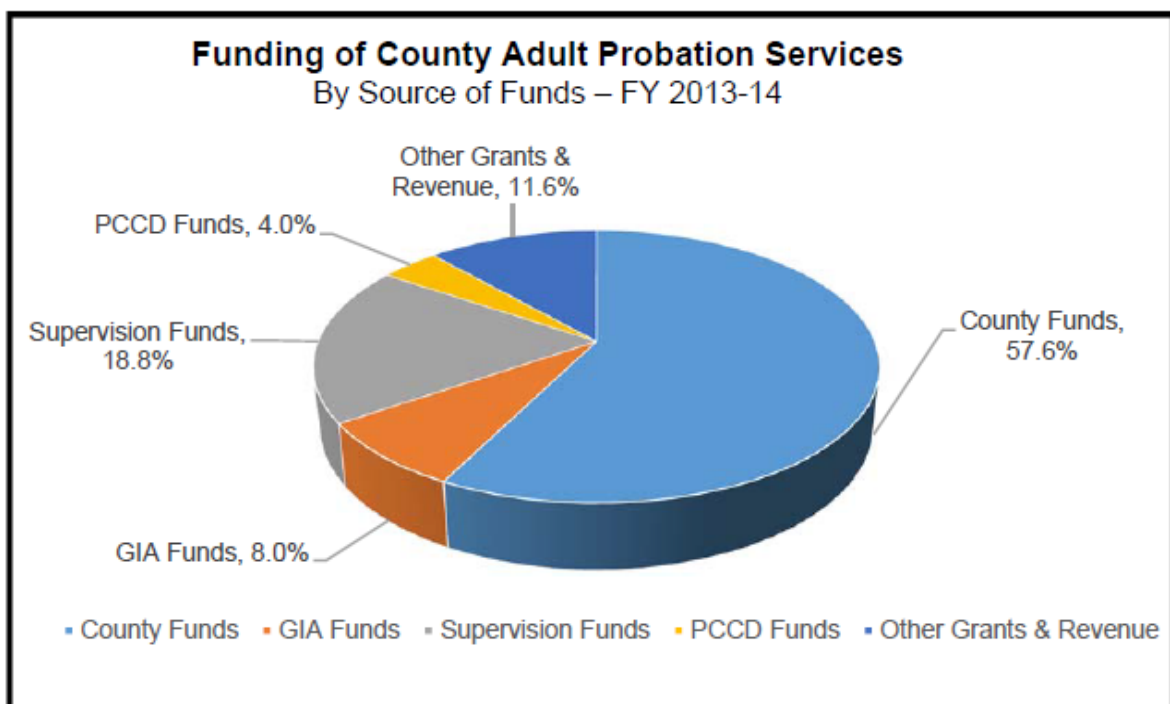
### **Resources**

While the adult probation and parole departments are county agencies, they are responsible for almost nine of every ten adults under correctional supervision in the Commonwealth. By virtue of that fact alone, they are the heart of the Commonwealth’s correctional system. Despite playing

such a central role in the state's public safety apparatus, the departments receive just a fraction (14%) of the Commonwealth's correctional funding. The remaining 86% of the funding goes to the state's prisons.

The county share of adult probation and parole funding is substantial and growing. In 1998-99, the county share was 45%. By 2013-14, that share had grown to 58%, a 29% increase. Figure 1 illustrates the total funding breakdown for adult probation and parole.

**Figure 1**

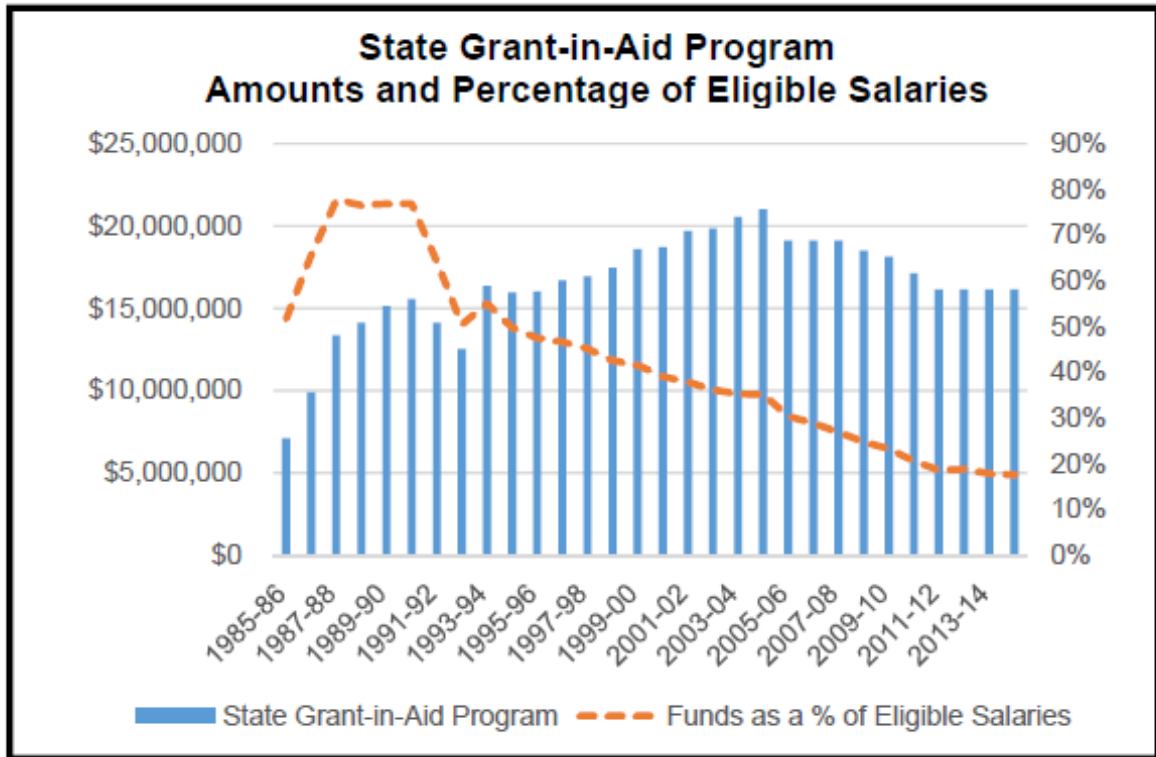


Source: Legislative Budget and Finance Committee 2015

The state does provide some funding to the county adult probation and parole departments through a grant-in-aid (GIA) program. As Figure 1 above shows, this is a very small portion of the funding stream - only 8%. Originally established by law in 1965 and amended in 1986 to reimburse 80% of eligible probation costs, the GIA funding has declined as the probation caseloads and demands have increased. In absolute numbers, the GIA funding peaked in 2005-6 and declined since then. As for the statutory requirement, it has never met the mandate of 80% (funding peaked

in 1988-92 at 77%) and has dropped precipitously since then to the current level of less than 20%. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2**



Source: Legislative Budget and Finance Committee 2015

The Commonwealth’s contribution to county level probation supervision is low in comparison to other states with county level probation services. In Texas, a large state with a decentralized probation system, the state pays 64% of the costs per probationer per year. Pennsylvania, in contrast, pays only 12% of the costs.

**Table 2 – Comparative State and County Funding Levels**

PA	Total	\$830	Texas	Total	\$1,250
	State	\$100		State	\$800
	County	\$730		County	\$450

Source: Council of State Governments

While state funding has declined and caseloads have grown, the state has exacerbated the situation with new laws that imposed unfunded mandates in the form of new responsibilities and additional offenders for county adult probation and parole. These include:

- New DUI law
- Ignition interlock
- Sex offender registration
- DNA sample collection
- Problem-solving courts

Looming on the horizon are potential changes emanating from the Justice Reinvestment Initiative - Phase II. One focus has been on the pretrial area with recommendations that counties consider establishing or expanding pretrial services to address crowding in county jails and prisons. The logical place to house these services is the adult probation and parole department, adding another function and set of cases. The JRI process also examined sentencing and made a number of recommendations to reform sentencing and relieve pressure on the state correctional facilities. While the exact form that such legislation will take is unknown, it is likely that the changes will result on more offenders being retained at the county level and many would be the responsibility of adult probation and parole.

## **Summary**

The county adult probation and parole departments find themselves in a very challenging situation. They are a key component of the criminal justice system. Their caseloads are high and have been growing. Potential new mandates are on the horizon. Funding comes primarily from the counties and their capacity for raising revenue is limited. The departments carry the largest share of the state's correctional workload, but the state provides only a fraction of the funding – an amount that is not adequate to support the provision of effective probation and parole services.

This description is provided to set the context for the difficulty of the challenges being faced and the importance of being successful at implementing EBP in adult probation and parole.

## II. Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)

To better understand evidence-based practices in probation and parole, and the challenge that implementing them represents, it is important to understand the recent history of probation and parole in the US. While each state is to some degree unique on the details, Pennsylvania’s history in this area largely parallels the rest of the country.

Prior to 1975, probation and parole supervision in the US and in Pennsylvania reflected a balanced approach which integrated *accountability and enforcement* of court orders with *assistance and services* to help offenders change their behavior and live law-abiding lives. While there was debate over how much emphasis should be placed on either role, there was broad consensus that both roles were needed for supervision to be effective.

In the 1980s, the states embraced the *just deserts* or more popularly “get tough on crime” philosophy, investing heavily in the punitive approach to crime. Harsher laws were passed, greatly increasing the use of incarceration. More aggressive responses to crime at the policy level (e.g. the War on Drugs, mandatory minimums) and the street level (e.g. stop and frisk) increased the reach and harshness of the criminal justice system. Many new jails and prisons were built and filled. The result was a massive increase in the size and scope of the correctional system. The increase in state prison populations is well known, both nationally and in Pennsylvania. Table 3 shows the growth from 1982 to 2008, the peak year of prison populations nationally.

**Table 3: Growth in Prison Population – 1982 to 2008**

	1982	2007	Difference
US	412,303	1,613,740	+437%
PA	9,365	51,429	+450%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

What is less well known is the concurrent increase in adult probation populations. The number of adults on probation in the US and Pennsylvania grew by more than 350% between 1982 and 2007, the peak year for adult probation nationally. Table 4 shows the growth in adult probation.

**Table 4: Growth in Adult Probation Population – 1982 to 2007**

	1982	2007	Difference
US	1,335,359	4,293,163	+350%
PA	53,623	192,231	+358%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

The impact of the “get tough” policies had a much greater impact on probation caseloads than prison populations, both nationally and in Pennsylvania. As the total adult probation caseload grew, so did individual agency and officer caseloads. The expenditures for prison and jail construction was not matched by investments in probation and parole. Officers were unable to spend the needed time with their clients and the outcomes reflected that.

The “get tough” era also changed the philosophy of probation and parole supervision. Risk control and risk management became the priority and assistance or services decreased to become all but non-existent. Monitoring and aggressive enforcement of conditions were paramount. Jails and prisons soon held many probationers and parolees on technical violation charges. Probation and parole violators currently comprise 30% of Pennsylvania’s state prison population. (CSG 2016)

In the late 1990s and into the new Millennium, things began to change. The financial and human cost of mass incarceration that resulted from two decades of “getting tough” was becoming increasingly burdensome to the states. A substantial body of research was suggesting that there were less expensive and more effective ways to deal with criminal offenders than locking them up for extended periods of time. The concept of treatment for offenders gained new traction and credibility with the development and expansion of drug courts.

These factors coalesced among leaders in the research, policy and practitioner communities in the identification and adoption of a model of correctional supervision based on extensive, methodologically sound research about how to reduce the risk of the offender recidivating by applying purposeful efforts to change their behavior. This concept, *risk reduction through*



*behavior change*, is the core of this approach to community supervision. Originally referred to as ‘*What Works*’ (in response to ‘*Nothing Works*’ {Martinson 1975}) and the *Principles of Effective Intervention* (Bonta and Andrews 2017), the model is now mostly widely referred to as *evidence-based practices* or EBP as the result of a rebranding by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) in 2004.

The attraction of EBP for probation and parole has many facets, but two stand out. The first is that offender treatment and interventions are more effective when delivered in the community. Incarceration is expensive and not conducive to achieving lasting behavior change. The second is that even the most expensive, well-resourced community supervision is about one tenth the cost of incarceration. (Pew Center on the States, 2009) The bottom line is that providing good quality evidence-based supervision in the community is less expensive and more effective than incarceration.

### **EBP for Adult Probation and Parole**

The model of EBP presented here is the result of integration of several models of EBP for community corrections from significant documents over past two decades. It represents the best thinking for the design and delivery of effective probation and parole supervision services.

The first source is the work of Canadian psychologists James Bonta and the late Don Andrews. They and their colleagues published two articles in 1990 where the principles of effective intervention were first identified. (Andrews, Zinger, et al 1990, Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990) This work was later expanded upon in their book, the *Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, first published in 1994 and now in its 6<sup>th</sup> edition. (Bonta and Andrews 2017)

The Andrews and Bonta work is best known for the *risk, need and responsivity principles* or R/N/R. This is the core construct of EBP and addresses the “*who, what and how*” questions of supervision. The *risk principle* calls for targeting moderate and high risk offenders for supervision and services and reducing supervision to low risk offenders. This is *who to target* in supervision. The *need principle* calls for targeting services on criminogenic needs (also referred to as dynamic risk factors), which drive criminal behavior. This answers the question: *what to work on* during the course of supervision? The *responsivity principle* calls for providing services and supervision

in ways that are most likely to be engage offenders, to which they will respond positively. There are two aspects to this principle, *general responsivity* which calls for using cognitive-behavioral techniques and strategies and *specific responsivity* which requires taking individual offender characteristics into account, such as age, gender, level of motivation, cultural identification and personality characteristics. Responsivity addresses the *how to supervise* question. While the R/N/R construct is at the core of EBP, there is much more.

While not an empirically-based set of practices, the reports of the Reinventing Probation Council under the label *Broken Windows Probation* contains a series of principles and recommendations from practitioners for improving the effectiveness of probation that help form the foundation for the EBP model. (Reinventing Probation Council 1999, 2000)

In 2004, the NIC model of EBP was introduced in a series of three briefs. (Bogue et al 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) A series of subsequent reports have built upon the original papers and focused extensively on implementation. (NIC website)

Also in 2004, NIC and the state of Maryland published a monograph entitled *Tools of the Trade*, which set forth the principles of their EBP model called *Proactive Community Supervision*. (Taxman, et al 2004)

In 2008, the Urban Institute published *Putting Public Safety First: 13 Parole Supervision Strategies to Enhance Reentry Outcomes* which set forth EBP for parole supervision. (Solomon, et al 2008)

The Council of State Governments (CSG) published *A Ten Step Guide to Transforming Probation Departments to Reduce Recidivism* in 2011. This presents the EBP model implemented in the Travis County, TX adult probation department. (Fabelo, et al 2011)

In 2017, Cullen, Jonson and Mears published *Reinventing Community Corrections: Ten Recommendations*, which includes a series of recommended change to improve effectiveness. (Cullen, Jonson and Mears 2017)

Taken together, this body of research and experience presents a robust and comprehensive model for the improvement of probation and parole practices. These findings are assembled below as the components of EBP for adult probation and parole supervision.

## **Components of EBP for Adult Probation and Parole**

### ***Organizational Commitment***

Implementation of EBP in probation and parole begins with the *commitment of the organization* to the core concept of *recidivism/risk reduction through behavior change*. The Reinventing Probation Council and the Urban Institute put it succinctly: probation and parole must be committed to “putting public safety first”. (Reinventing Probation Council 1999, 2000, Solomon, et al 2008)

The second part of this organizational commitment must also be the *willingness to be accountable* for the results of the agency activities. Was recidivism reduced? Was community safety enhanced?

The third part of the commitment is to *quality implementation of EBP*. This flows naturally from the prior two elements – it will not be possible to achieve recidivism reduction without EBP and any probation and parole executive would be reluctant to measure outcomes if effective practices are not in place.

This organizational commitment should be reflected in the departments’ mission, vision, values and goals, resource allocation and in all aspects of agency policy and practice.

### ***Risk and Need Assessment***

Effective, quality *assessment of offender risk and needs* with actuarial instruments is the foundation of EBP. The instruments should be *third generation (3G)* or better. They should have been *validated* during their development and also in other jurisdictions. Ideally, an instrument would be validated on a PA population. Instruments should be validated periodically within an agency. The frequency of a validation study will be dependent on resources, but every five years is suggested.

Assessment instruments should be *matched to their decision point* in the justice system. For example, the goals of the pretrial assessment process are different from the probation supervision process. A risk screening instrument can be much shorter and have fewer if any dynamic variables, as the goal is solely to determine risk level. Screening for drug and alcohol treatment needs uses a different set of variables driven by the purpose of the assessment. Different goals require different information for the assessment. Mismatched assessment instruments will perform poorly and undermine confidence in the instrument.

The assessment instruments must also be *matched to the offender group*. The popular assessment instruments (e.g. Level of Service [LSI] suite of instruments, the Ohio Risk Assessment System [ORAS] suite, the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions [COMPAS]) perform well with the “generic” offender – those who commit primarily property and drug crimes for example. For other offender groups, such as those convicted of sex crimes, violent offenses, DUI and domestic violence offenders, specialized instruments using different variables are required. Use of generic instruments on specialized populations will result in assessments that are inaccurate and don’t conform to staff experience, undermining their confidence in the instrument.

*Reassessment at routine intervals is essential.* Third and fourth generation risk and need assessments use dynamic variables which are subject to change. It is critical to apply the assessment periodically to measure change in both risk level and need severity. Reassessment should be done no less than annually, ideally every six months if resources allow. They should also be done when a significant adverse event occurs, such as a new arrest.

### ***Supervision Practices***

Evidence-based supervision practices should start with the *allocation of resources based on the risk principle*. New cases should be screened for risk level using a screening instrument. Low risk offenders should be assigned to *minimal supervision* caseloads where routine contact isn’t required. Reduced contact rates do not result in increased recidivism by low risk offenders. (Cohen, Cook and Lowenkamp 2016) Such caseloads can exceed 400 to 500 cases with no adverse impact on public safety. (Ahlman, & Malvestuto 2010, Barnes, Ahlman, Gill, Sherman, Kurtz and Malvestuto 2010)

Offenders scoring moderate to high risk should be assigned to *manageable-sized caseloads* for supervision. Ideal caseload size is a complex question, but the caseload standards of the America Probation and Parole Association are research-based and represent a good starting point. (Burrell 2007) Table 5 displays the APPA standards.

**Table 5: APPA Recommended Adult Caseload Standards**

<b>Case Type</b>	<b>Cases to Staff Ratio</b>
Intensive	20:1
Moderate to High Risk	50:1
Low Risk	200:1
Administrative	No limit? 1,000?

Source: Burrell 2007

The importance of manageable caseloads to effective implementation of EBP cannot be overstated. Officers simply need more time to perform the tasks. A recent federally-funded research project into the effectiveness of EBP in probation came to this conclusion regarding caseload size: “We suggest that reduced caseloads be considered as fundamental to EBP as risk/need assessment and responsivity.” (Jalbert, et al 2011)

One of the principles of the NIC EBP model is *dosage*, which refers to the amount of treatment provided to an offender. (Bogue, et al 2004a) Higher risk and need offenders should receive greater “doses” of treatment to address their needs. The corollary for this in supervision is that higher risk and need probationers and parolees should receive greater amounts or “doses” of supervision from their probation and parole officers (PPO) This has been a common strategy in probation and parole since the emergence of risk and need assessment, classification and contact standards in the 1980s. (National Institute of Corrections 1981) Achieving adequate doses of supervision can be extremely difficult unless caseloads are of manageable size. With the development of cognitive behavioral

supervision models, contacts will require more time, making dosage and caseload size even more critical issues.

The Board of Probation and Parole has recognized the importance of manageable caseloads and is moving aggressively toward meeting the APPA standards. In the last two years, 216 new parole agents have been hired, bringing the state parole agent caseload ratio to 1:50. (Dunn, 2018)

The gap between the caseloads of state parole and county adult probation and parole was highlighted in the Council of State Governments’ analysis as part of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. In 2014, prior to the Board’s recent staffing increases, their parole agent caseloads were 60% the size of a county adult PPO’s caseload. (See table 6) The actual average probation caseload is higher than 109, as surveys of county staff have revealed. (Council of State Governments, 2016, Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, 2015) The 109 figure is a simple division of caseload by number of staff, as though officers and cases were evenly distributed across the state.

**Table 6 – Pennsylvania Average Caseload Sizes - 2014**

	State Parole	County Adult Probation
Parole Agents/ Probation Officers	498	1,704
Total Caseload	33,082	187,707
Average Caseload	66:1	109:1

Source: Council of State Governments

Supervision caseloads should be *organized geographically*, with offenders living in a community or section of a county assigned to the same PPO. This is not only more efficient, it increases the officer’s knowledge of the community and its resources. (Solomon, et al 2008, Reinventing Probation Council 1999, 2000)

Another principle for the organization of caseloads is *specialization*. Offenders with the same offense category (sex offenders) or the same criminogenic factors (drug abuse) assigned to specialized officers. Such PPOs develop advanced knowledge and skills, attend specialized training and develop relationships with treatment providers in the community. (Burrell 2005)

### ***Offender Motivation***

It is axiomatic that many, if not most persons on probation or parole are not highly motivated to change their behavior. PPOs must work to increase offender motivation to work at change if the supervision is to be effective at reducing risk.

*Offender Engagement* – A simple but effective strategy is to engage the offender more deeply in the supervision process. Rather than being a passive subject of the PPO’s efforts, the offender is drawn into supervision as a full partner. This can be done through discussion of the results of the risk and need assessment, having a dialogue about the offender’s goals, and collaborating on the content of case plan and supervision strategy.

*Working Alliance* –The quality of the relationship between a PPO and person under supervision is a critical if not well known aspect of supervision effectiveness. A trust-based relationship builds a strong foundation for supervision interactions. The PPO must be clear about the dual role they play (accountability and facilitating change) and carry that role out appropriately (being firm but fair). A strong alliance can increase an offender’s motivation. (Dowden & Andrews 2004, Chamberlain et al 2018, Gleicher, Manchak & Cullen 2013)

*Motivational Interviewing (MI)* – This is an evidence-based practice that restructures the manner in which the PPO talks with the offender. It is a more collaborative approach, engaging the offender more and focusing on motivation to change. This requires extensive training and the provision of ongoing feedback and coaching to reach proficiency. (Stinson & Clark 2018)

*Incentives & Reinforcements* - One of the core principles of the EBP model is that human beings respond more to incentives and reinforcements when they are considering changing their behavior. Simply stated, positive incentives and reinforcements work better than punitive sanctions in producing lasting behavior change. (Carter 2015) Adult probation and

parole departments should develop policies that formalize the process of providing positive reinforcements in responses to sustained positive behavior. Such incentives can include:

- Reduced supervision level.
- Reduced requirements (supervision fees, drug testing, community service).
- Behavioral contracts.
- Earned compliance credits.
- Early discharge from supervision.

Some incentives will require the support of the Judiciary and perhaps other stakeholders such as the district attorney. Recent research suggests that offenders most value incentives that are tangible, such as earned compliance credits to reduce time on supervision, reduced fees and reduced reporting requirements. These are more involved to implement than simple recognition-based incentives such as verbal praise, certificates, gift cards and public recognition. (Wodahl, et al 2017)

### ***Case Planning***

The case plan is a written document that contains the strategy and goals for supervision. The plan should *target criminogenic risk factors* which drive the criminal behavior. Those factors will be identified in the risk and need assessment. The primary focus should be addressing the criminogenic risk factors. The plan should also reflect court-imposed requirements of the offender, but those should not be the primary focus.

The plan should include a limited number (two or three) of SMART objectives for the offender to work on. SMART is an acronym for **s**pecific, **m**easureable, **a**ttainable, **r**elevant and **t**ime-limited. The plan should have a behavioral focus, specifying what behaviors the offender is expected to exhibit.

When a reassessment of risk and needs is done, the case plan should be updated. The results of the offender's efforts (objectives achieved) should be recorded and tracked over time. Regular and timely achievement of case plan objectives should figure into the application of incentives by the PPO.



### *Effective Interventions*

Evidence-based supervision practices represent a *substantial redefinition and restructuring of PPO activities in supervision*. The singular focus on monitoring and enforcement activities that characterizes too many departments and officers needs to be changed to reflect techniques and practices that help to reduce risk. As noted above, the general responsivity principle calls for the use of cognitive behavioral techniques and interventions with offenders, as these have proven to be the most effective approach to reducing risk and achieving lasting behavior change.

This will be a *formidable change* for many staff. The change starts with the recognition and acceptance of a philosophy that probation and parole supervision has a substantial role to play in assisting offenders with the behavior change process. Acting as a change agent represents a challenge for many PPOs, as it represents a new role, requires mastery of new skills, fundamentally changes the relationship between officer and client, and redefines the purpose and nature of officer-client contacts and interactions. (Bourgon et al 2012)

Fortunately there are many resources and models available to guide this redefinition process and equip staff with the new skills they need to be effective in an evidence-based supervision agency. These fall into three categories: individual staff-based, group-based and external treatment and service providers.

*Individual staff-based models* focus on the knowledge, skills, abilities and practices of individual PPOs as they work in their caseload one-on-one with offenders. All of these models are based on the principles of EBP – including general responsivity which calls for the use of cognitive behavioral interventions and tactics.

#### *Four Core Competencies (Carey Group)*

This training addresses four critical, foundational techniques and skill sets for PPOs. The competencies are:

Professional Alliance

Skill Practice

Case Planning

Rewards and Sanctions

### *Core Correctional Practices (University of Cincinnati)*

This is a comprehensive set of practices and skills for PPOs to use in supervision contacts and interventions. They include:

Interpersonal Relationships

Anti-criminal, Pro-social Modeling

Effective Reinforcement

Effective Disapproval

Effective Use of Authority

Cognitive Restructuring

Structured Skill Building

Problem Solving Skills

### *Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS) (University of Cincinnati)*

This model provides a theoretical framework, structure and specific tasks for the supervision officer to use in interactions with the offender. It integrates the Core Correctional Practices. Each contact follows a process that includes four steps:

- Check-In – the officer determines if the offender has any urgent problems, build rapport and discusses compliance with court requirements.
- Review – this is a review of skills discussed in the prior contact, the application of those skills and trouble-shooting any problems in the use of those skills.
- Intervention – the officer identifies continued areas of need, trends in problems the offender is experiencing, teaches relevant skills and targets problematic thinking.
- Homework – the offender is given the opportunity to see the officer model the new skill, and to practice in role play. A homework assignment based on the new skill is given, along with instructions to follow before the next contact.

### *Carey Guides and BITS (Brief Intervention Tools)*

The Guides come in two categories – one addressing criminogenic risk factors (14 guides) and the second providing case management techniques

and strategies (19 guides). Each Guide provides PPOs with two to four tools that address criminogenic needs, risk factors and effective case management.

The BITS are user-friendly tools that address six offender skill deficits in short, structured interventions. The topics are:

- Decision Making
- Overcoming Automatic Responses
- Overcoming Thinking Traps
- Problem Solving
- Thinking Traps
- Who I Spend Time With

They can be used in conjunction with the Guides or as a stand-alone tool to address a variety of case management issues.

*Group-based models* of cognitive behavioral interventions use trained facilitators, including PPOs as well as other service provider staff to deliver a structured curriculum to small groups of offenders in sessions over an extended period of time (typically several months). Classroom sessions feature didactic learning, group discussions, role playing and feedback. Participants have homework assignments to complete between sessions. There are a number of models available and those listed have been found to be effective. (Milkman and Wanberg 2007)

*Thinking for a Change (T4C)* - National Institute of Corrections

*Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)*

*Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART)*

*Reasoning & Rehabilitation (R&R)*

*Criminal Conduct and Substance Abuse Treatment: Strategies for*

*Self-Improvement and Change*

Since the publication assessing these models, additional models have become available, including:

*Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions* - University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute

*Cognitive Behavior Change Curricula* - National Curriculum and Training Institute

*Treatment and service providers* external to the adult probation and parole departments are an important and valuable resource. They provide treatment and services that are normally outside the scope and capabilities of probation and parole departments. These include treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, sexual offending, mental health services and violence prevention. The APPDs should ensure that the providers conform to the same principles for treatment and service delivery – the use of evidence-based models, delivered with fidelity and quality. All providers should be required to utilize the following:

- Evidence-based models of treatment and service.
- Assessment-driven treatment modalities and services.
- Regular communication and collaboration between supervising PPOs and program case managers, counsellors and other treatment staff.
- Measurement, tracking and reporting of outcomes to supervising PPOs and department on a routine and timely basis.
- Performance-based contracts should be considered to ensure accountability.

### ***Graduated Sanctions***

Sanctions for non-compliance with conditions of probation or parole are an important part of the supervision process. They provide accountability for behavior. The use of sanctions has historically been largely limited to filing a violation of probation or parole (VOP) and seeking revocation, with incarceration as the disposition. This was particularly the case in the period of the 1980s and 1990s. Numerous studies have shown that a high portion of new prison admissions were for violations of probation or parole. (Petersilia 2003) The Council of State Governments' analysis for the Justice Reinvestment Initiative found that 30% of Pennsylvania's state prison population were incarcerated for a violation of county probation (17%) or state parole (13%). (CSG July 2016)

Violations of probation are not only a problem once the offender is sentenced to the state correctional system. Many inmates at the county level are detained on violation charges prior to disposition. In Philadelphia, half of the city's prison population is detained on

probation and parole violation charges (Ewing 2017). In another PA county, technical (31%) and new crime (19%) VOPs comprise 50% of the jail population.

This is not a new problem. A study of Pennsylvania's county jails in 2006 found that: "Almost without exception in the sites visited, interview participants pointed to the VOP process as posing the single biggest population control problem for the county jail and an area in greater need for change than either pretrial or sentencing practices." (Harland & Smith 2006, p.17)

A key point to keep in mind is that many of those violations were *technical violations* for failure to comply with the conditions of supervision, not new criminal activity. Using revocation of probation or parole as a response to such violations has been shown to contribute to jail and prison crowding and to have little positive effect in terms of behavior change by the offender. Research has shown that a more systematic approach to non-compliance can reduce the use of incarceration, increase compliance with conditions, improve overall outcomes and not have an adverse impact on public safety. (Hawken & Kleiman 2007)

Many jurisdictions have developed grids or matrices to guide sanctioning. (Carter 2015) These typically address offender risk level, violation seriousness and violation frequency. The grid then suggests several type of sanctions which could be employed. When developing such sanctioning policy, departments should ensure that it addresses the following points:

- Sanctioning should be swift, certain and fair. All instances of non-compliance should be officially "noticed" as soon as they are discovered and some official response should be imposed as quickly as possible.
- The sanctions should be proportional to the non-compliant behavior.
- A range of non-custodial options should be developed and used to graduate responses to non-compliance.
- PPOs should take a problem-solving focus when dealing with non-compliance, seeking to understand the drivers of the behavior and not simply request a sanction.
- Non-compliance should be addressed with interventions that target criminogenic factors when that is determined to be the cause.

## ***Performance Measurement***

Designing and implementing an evidence-based approach to supervision requires a *robust measurement and feedback system*. Without regular measurement and analysis of results, it is not possible to know whether the new policies and practices are having the desired impact. Without regular monitoring of key processes and practices, it is not possible to know whether the evidence-based practices have been successfully implemented. (Bogue, et al 2004a, Burrell and Gelb 2007, Petersilia 1993, Pew Center on the States 2008)

The performance measurement system should have three major components:

*Process Measurement* – the assessment of how well policies and practices have been implemented. Do the details of the implementation match the design? Is there fidelity to the essential elements of the model? Absent a high degree of fidelity, the desired results will not be achieved.

There are a variety of approaches to measuring, improving and ultimately ensuring fidelity, including Quality Assurance (QA) Quality Control (QC). Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Total Quality Management (TQM). All provide a framework to address process measurement and fidelity.

*Outcome Measurement* – measuring results is essential to effective management. Outcomes should be tied to the agency mission and goals. They should look at short, intermediate and long term results. The measures should examine outcomes at the client level, staff level, unit and program level, agency level and community level.

*Routine Feedback* – Data on outcomes should be widely available and integrated into all aspects of agency management and communication. Results should be shared with clients, staff, stakeholders, treatment/service providers, funders and the general public.

## **The Challenges of Implementation**

Implementation of EBP in county APPDs poses many significant challenges. It is important to be aware of them and prepare for them to the greatest degree possible and seek out assistance.

*Time* – This is one of the least appreciated and most challenging aspects to grasp. (Burrell & Rhine 2007) There are several components to the issue of time in the context of implementation.

- *Overall Time Frame* – the overall time frame for successful implementation of a major change like EBP is long, measured in years. The National Implementation Research Network suggests that major changes take between two and four years. (Fixsen, et al 2005) The implementation of the Maryland EBP model took five years. (Taxman et al 2004) In Travis County, TX, implementation also took more than five years. (Fabelo, et al 2011) These two efforts, one a state agency with four pilot regions and one county department, represent implementation on a much smaller scale than that underway in Pennsylvania's county adult probation and parole departments.

Given these long time frames, it is critically important to communicate to overseers, stakeholders, funders and agency staff that this will not be a quick fix but rather a long term commitment. The project should be divided into manageable phases with the sequencing of key components in logical order. Regular feedback on progress and results should be provided.

- *Time to Plan and Manage* – another underappreciated component is the time required of agency staff to plan and manage the implementation process. This falls mainly on executive and managerial staff, but will also effect supervisory and line officers as they serve on myriad teams and committees that are necessary to effective implementation.
- *Time for Training* – implementation of EBP requires substantial amounts of skill training. This requires staff to be in the classroom, away from their caseloads and regular duties. Some staff will become trainers and will spend time developing and

delivering training to their colleagues. Balancing the demands of caseloads with the need for training on new skills will lengthen the time frame.

- *Time for Practice of New Skills* – staff will not be proficient with many of the new skills (i.e. Motivational Interviewing, Core Correctional Practices) with only classroom training. They will need time to practice these skills, develop confidence and competence, receive coaching and feedback and ultimately master the new skill set. This is done through daily practice in the process of supervising offenders.
- *Time for New and Redefined Functions* – implementation of EBP involves some new functions (risk and need assessment, case planning) and redefines traditional functions (supervision contacts). The cumulative impact is to increase the amount of time an officer spends performing core functions. This is why caseload size is so critical to the effectiveness of EBP. Officers must have sufficient time to spend with each offender if the potential of EBP for improved outcomes is to be realized.

This aspect of time applies to first-line supervisors as well. Their roles will be redefined to incorporate providing very specific modes of feedback on skill practice and acquisition, engaging in coaching with staff and reviewing case plans and supervision strategies. These new and redefined roles will also effect the supervisor’s “caseload”. That is the number of staff they are responsible for (the span of control) and the total caseload of those PPOs carry. The supervisor is ultimately responsible for ensuring that policies and practices are effectively implemented for all of those staff and offenders. As with line officers, the supervisors must have manageable caseloads if they are to perform their jobs effectively. (Armstrong et al 2011)

***Knowledge of Implementation*** – as executives in both the public and private sectors have discovered, implementation of organizational change is not an easy task. It requires knowledge and a set of skills that are different than those required for management of daily operations. Few executives in any field have been trained in those skills, and probation and parole is no exception. Fortunately, as EBPs have developed for offender supervision, so



too have they been identified for implementation. The National Implementation Research Network has researched, developed and promoted the “science of implementation” to guide executives, managers and staff as they seek to put into place models such as EBP. (Fixsen et al 2005) This body of work provides the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential to successful implementation. This also has a time aspect – executives and managers will need some time to learn, practice and master this new skill set – while running an agency.

**Resources** – implementation of EBP will require resources to support a variety of activities. This includes training (trainers, materials, facilities, equipment) and technical assistance. Probation and parole departments also need increased treatment and service resources to address the many behavioral and medical problems and needs of those under supervision. Many of these needs are beyond the ability of PPOs to address and thus require specialized services. As these problems and needs are *criminogenic* or crime-producing, successful supervision requires that they be addressed.

**Staff** – the most obvious aspect of staffing is the department’s *capacity* – are there sufficient staff to have manageable caseloads which enable them to deliver EBP with fidelity? As noted above, manageable caseloads are essential to the successful implementation of EBPs in probation and parole. (Jalbert, et al 2010) This includes the “supervisor caseload” as well.

Beyond officers and supervisors, there are other staff positions which can be very helpful in an evidence-based organization. These include coaches, master trainers, cognitive group facilitators, research and information specialists, and project managers.

A companion to the *capacity* aspect of staff is the *capability* aspect. Capabilities refers to the education, training, professional philosophy; and overall knowledge, skills and abilities of staff. These aspects must be aligned with the philosophy, purpose and practices of evidence-based supervision.

**Support and Commitment** – embarking on the journey of implementation of EBP is a major, long-term challenge for an agency. The road will be bumpy, unforeseen barriers will emerge, not everything attempted will be successful and people will question the

wisdom of embarking on the journey in the first place. This is why one of the first tasks is the development of support and commitment within and outside the department.

- *Agency Staff* - development of strong staff support is critical. Subtle and invisible resistance will doom the project. Educating staff as to what is planned, why the change is needed, how it will play out, how it affects their jobs and what role they will play in the process are all key questions which must be answered to the satisfaction of the staff. Structured assessments instruments for organizational climate and culture, and change readiness can provide detailed, relevant and anonymous feedback on key aspects of the agency culture.

Staff at all levels of the organization should be provided the opportunity, and be encouraged, to participate in the implementation process. There is more than enough work to go around. Involving staff brings their experience to the table, enriching the discussion and increasing the likelihood of success. Staff who are involved become invested in the success of the endeavor.

- *Internal stakeholders* – The members of the local judiciary are critical stakeholders for the APPDs. Implementation of EBPs will have an impact on court processes and practices. The process of implementation over extended periods of time will require the patience and support of the judges and court administrators as staff are trained, policies and procedures are modified and the challenges of implementation are confronted and met.
- *External Stakeholders* – the APPDs do not operate in a vacuum, in fact they are deeply involved almost every aspect of the criminal justice system. As a result, changes in probation and parole policies and practices will have an impact on the work of other agencies and key actors. These external stakeholders include the county commissioners, district attorney, public defender and other defense counsel, county jail/prison, victim service agencies and victims of crime, treatment and service providers, the media and the community at large.

Educational efforts should be undertaken for both internal and external stakeholders, although at a less detailed level than for internal staff. Internal and external stakeholders should also be given the opportunity to participate as appropriate, on committees or perhaps on an oversight committee. Their commitment and support is just as important as that of staff.

**Technology** – a critical shortcoming of the county APPDs is the lack of effective automation and management information. Data-driven policy analysis such as that of the JRI process is seriously handicapped by the lack of statewide data on the APPD caseloads, performance and outcomes. On the department level, staff at all levels are handicapped by the lack of comprehensive, user-friendly, standardized information systems. Aspiring to become an evidence-based organization *requires* measuring, recording, analyzing and reporting data on a routine basis, and acting on that information from the individual case level all the way to agency-wide matters.

This situation appears to be improving of late. The *Unified Case Management System* (UCMS) developed and marketed by the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is installed in 20 county APPDs. Thirty-three additional departments have installed or are in the process of installing or contracting for the case management system developed and marketed by BTM Software Solutions. Additionally, four large departments in southeastern Pennsylvania (Bucks, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) are using the *MonitorCMS* case management system developed by Connextrex. These four departments supervise almost one half of the county adult probation and parole caseload. As a result, these three case management systems will be in use in 57 of the 65 departments, providing a much more uniform and functional data environment. Development of standardized reports for department management and for reporting statewide data from the counties will much easier.

Recent outreach to the CMS vendors resulted in an agreement to collaborate on a standardized data dashboard for the APPDs. Additionally, JNET is developing a statewide recidivism reporting platform, and has agreed to support the data dashboard project as well.

## **Summary**

This section has presented what are likely to be seen as the most imposing aspects of EBP. The first aspect is the eight components, which cover all aspects of probation and parole supervision in depth. The components comprise an interrelated, interdependent model. All components are required if the significant reductions in recidivism that the research and experience suggest are possible (20 to 30% reduction) will be achieved.

The second aspect flows from the fact that the eight components are challenging and demanding to implement, both individually and certainly as a whole. This is no simple task with a quick return on a modest investment of effort. Experience shows that EBPs are not self-executing, their implementation must be carefully and skillfully managed. The good news is that both the EBP components and the implementation process have been well tested and documented, and more experience is being gained every day.

### **III. EBP in Pennsylvania**

The challenges of implementation of EBP in the county adult probation and parole departments are daunting, but the Commonwealth's probation and parole system is not without experience in this area. All three of components of the system (state parole, juvenile probation and the APPDs) have implemented EBP to some degree. This experience will provide significant leverage as the implementation process moves forward.

#### ***County Adult Probation & Parole***

The largest component of the probation and parole system has the lowest degree of implementation of EBP. There has been no coordinated statewide effort at implementation. This reflects the decentralized nature of the county-based system, and the lack of any substantial initiative, investment or leadership at the state level.

This is not to say that there has been no activity in this area. Many of the county adult probation and parole departments have made substantial efforts on their own to implement EBP. These efforts have come through the use of local funds and some grant support. The

larger counties have had more success with this, primarily because their budgets and staff complements are larger, providing opportunities to conduct staff training and implement elements of EBP. In many other counties, the resource structure is less robust and little substantive efforts have been possible. In the small, primarily rural counties, limited progress has been possible.

A good deal of training on EBP has been provided to the adult probation and parole staff. The Board of Probation and Parole has made space available to county staff in their training programs. The Basic Training Academy (BTA) conducted by the Board and attended by many county probation and parole staff, has several EBP components. The Association has conducted many training sessions on EBP for the Chief Probation Officers (CPOs) at their annual conferences. Other professional associations provide EBP training at their conferences.

The result of these efforts to date has been an uneven and generally sub-optimal implementation of EBP in the county adult departments. This is due more to structural and resource constraints than reluctance on the part of the leadership of the APPDs. These constraints are well documented in a series of surveys of adult probation and parole conducted in recent years.

**Table 7 - Surveys of County Adult Probation & Parole on EBP**

Year	Organization
2013	CCAPPOAP
2014	CCAPPOAP/University of Pennsylvania
2015	Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
2016	Council of State Governments Justice Center (JRI)

The results of these surveys are remarkably consistent. They portray a system that lacks the basic tools it needs to implement a large and complex practice model such as EBP. The major finding of the surveys are:

- Lack of resources – staff at all levels
- Lack of training resources.
- Staffing – large caseloads.
- Lack of knowledge about EBP.
- Lack of knowledge of implementation.
- Lack of staff support.
- Lack of stakeholder support.
- Lack of supportive technology.

### ***State Adult Parole Supervision***

The Board of Probation and Parole has been working at implementing EBP in parole supervision for a decade. This has enabled the parole supervision staff to develop experience and expertise in EBP, build a cadre of experienced trainers and resulted in the integration of EBP into operations, policy and training. With the transition of parole supervision from the Board to the Department of Corrections, this base of experience and training resources will continue to be a valuable resource to the county APPDs.

### ***County Juvenile Probation Departments***

The Commonwealth's juvenile probation departments are also county agencies within the local judiciary. Since 2010, the juvenile departments have been working at implementation of EBP in juvenile probation. This endeavor has been led by the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers and the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC). A comprehensive EBP model, the *Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy* (JJSES) was adopted in 2012. Since that time, the juvenile probation departments have made significant progress in implementation of the EBP model prescribed in the JJSES.

The success of the juvenile probation departments can be attributed to many factors, a number of which relate to structure and resources. These are important to recognize and remember as they will affect the extent to which the success in juvenile probation and inform the efforts in adult probation and parole.

The key differences include:

- Declining juvenile crime – long term trends show that fewer juveniles are being referred to the juvenile court and probation system, reduced the demand for services and the overall system caseload.
- Smaller caseloads – historically, juvenile probation has had smaller caseloads, both at the agency and PO level.
- Greater state funding – the state funding contribution to the juvenile probation departments is larger in both proportional and absolute terms than that in adult.
- Implementation support – funding was provided by PCCD for a series of strategic planning sessions and implementation grants.
- More treatment resources and services – there is a much more robust community of treatment programs and service providers available to the juvenile system.
- Greater support for juvenile justice – there is greater level of both public and political support for the use of community-based options and services for juveniles.
- State level leadership and support – the JCJC is a state agency whose primary purpose is to support juvenile court operations at the county level, which is to say, juvenile probation. The JCJC provides funding, training, technical assistance, statewide advocacy, performance measurement and reporting, and research. Working in partnership with the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, the JCJC has taken a strategic, long term perspective on strengthening and enhancing the juvenile probation system.

This experience has several important lessons for the adult system. First is the importance of *state-level leadership* to guide the implementation. Second is the value of strong *collaboration* between the state leadership (JCJC) and the county Chiefs, both individually and collectively as the Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers. Third is the value of *financial support* through implementation grants provided by the PCCD. Fourth is the long term, *strategic perspective* that recognizes that implementation is a multi-year endeavor. The juvenile probation system has been working at implementation for more than a decade. Finally, the value of a *flexible and phased approach* that accommodates the diversity of implementation levels and capacities of the juvenile probation departments. The efforts of the adult departments will be informed by and benefit from these lessons.

### ***The EBP Strategic Plan***

Recognizing that the existing approach to implementing EBP in county adult probation and parole was not effective, the Association and its partners undertook a change in strategy in 2015. With financial support for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, participation and support from the County Commissioners Association of PA, the Department of Corrections and the Board of Probation and Parole, and technical assistance from Mark Carey of the Carey Group, the Association developed the *Evidence-Based Practices Strategic Plan 2016-2018* for adult probation and parole. The plan was developed during 2015-2016 and was adopted by the Association in September 2016. The time frame for the Plan was 2016-2018. The Association recently voted to extend it for three additional years, 2019-2021.

The planning process and the implementation both feature a high degree of stakeholder involvement. Partners with the Association in this effort include the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (APOC), the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PDOC). All of these partners are represented on the project's Statewide EBP Leadership Team, a nineteen-member group charged with guiding the implementation of EBPs in the county APPDs.

### ***Justice Reinvestment Initiative***

The Commonwealth is one of 26 states to have participated in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) with the Council of States Governments Justice Center (CSG). JRI is a federally-funded project to assist states with assessing their correctional systems to reduce costs and increase effectiveness. It is a non-partisan, data-driven approach to examine the drivers of correctional costs and populations, and explore less costly and more effective options. Pennsylvania completed its participation in the second phase of JRI with CSG in 2017.



JRI Phase I was conducted in 2011-2012 and focused on state corrections and state parole. Some savings were realized, but the correctional population continued to grow. This prompted the Commonwealth to request a second round of assistance which culminated in JRI Phase II which occurred in 2015-2017. Phase II shifted the focus to the front end of the correctional system at the county level. Research and analysis examined sentencing practices and probation supervision. Later in the process, pretrial practices came under scrutiny as well.

The CSG analysis revealed the need to significantly strengthen the supervision capacity of the county adult probation and parole departments. (CSG Presentations 2016) Recommendations provided during the JRI process included:

- Redesign state support and leadership for county probation.
- Create a new state oversight and governing body for adult probation.
- Revise the state funding formula to reflect numbers of offenders supervised and their risk levels.
- Increase state Grant-in-Aid funding.
- Create discretionary grants to support EBP implementation.
- Allow the counties to retain all supervision fee revenue.
- Improve the uniformity and quality of probation and parole supervision.
- Improve data collection and monitoring of probation and parole.

The JRI process also identified a number of statutory changes which could result in fewer offenders being sentenced to state custody. These include changing the short minimum sentence practices, reclassifying some offenses, revising sentencing guidelines to reduce the number of drug and property offenders sent to state correctional institutions and reducing the number of technical probation violators revoked to state custody. While the fate of such recommendations in the legislative process is unknown, adoption of any of them will increase the workload of the county APPDs, agencies which are already understaffed and overloaded.

In the final report, CSG provided a policy framework to achieve the goals of JRI in Pennsylvania. (CSG 2017) The policy options related to county APPDs include:

- Improve the state’s approach to funding and supporting county APPDs.
- Increase state funding to county APPDs.

These policy options will also be considered in the legislative process

While the fate of these recommendations is being decided, it is important to note that the savings from the first phase of JRI has resulted in much needed support to the county adult probation and parole departments to support EBP implementation. In 2016, \$800,000 was provided to implement risk and need assessment, a core EBP. This enabled 29 counties to implement or enhance risk and need assessment. In 2017, \$1.3 million was awarded to support a variety of probation improvement projects, many of them including computerized case management systems. This will help to address a critical shortcoming of the adult probation and parole system – the lack of accurate and reliable data.

The JRI funding was eliminated in the state’s budget process of FY 2017-8. Fortunately, the PCCD was able to allocate federal funds of \$1.0 million to a grant category, for which the Association applied and was awarded the two year grant.

## **Summary**

The past decade is a period during which a great deal of activity has occurred related to improving probation and parole through implementation of EBP. There is still much remaining to be done, but experiences in juvenile probation, state parole and in a number of APPDs have established a solid base on which to continue to build. A strong partnership of key stakeholders at the state level has joined the Association to help guide the implementation process. A Strategic Plan has been adopted and is guiding implementation activities. The non-partisan, data-driven analysis of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative has provided extensive documentation and data on the dimensions, costs, outcomes, strengths and weaknesses of the Commonwealth’s correctional system. While at time it felt like a “perfect storm”, all of this activity has set the stage for the EBP implementation in Pennsylvania’s county adult probation and parole departments.

#### **IV. The Implementation Blueprint**

This Blueprint is designed to assist the APPDs as they undertake implementation of EBP. It is a *staged implementation* with four discrete stages, designed to be followed in sequence. The stages can be viewed as building blocks which when assembled will provide the framework for an evidence-based supervision agency.

The stages divide the implementation into smaller, more manageable pieces. Trying to grasp, no less implement the EBP model in one enormous package is daunting and likely to deter many CPOs from even attempting to implement EBP. (Fabelo et al 2011)

Creating stages also provides opportunities to pause and recognize progress and success at key points in implementation. Celebrating successes along the way is a key point in maintaining enthusiasm and commitment among staff and stakeholders. (Kotter & Cohen 2002)

The stages move in a logical, sequential fashion. Core, foundational components are implemented first, followed later by components that are dependent on earlier ones. This means that there are few options with some aspects – for example, risk and need assessment is foundational and the model cannot proceed without it.

There is flexibility built into the staged model. This reflects the fact that the APPDs are starting this process from different points. Some were early adopters of EBP and have some or many components already in place. This enables them to enter the sequence somewhere farther along. Those counties may also choose to revisit some component they already implemented to determine how well they are functioning.

Other counties may have one component in place and still others haven't begun at all. Those will be encouraged to follow the full sequence of stages in order.

As implementation proceeds, there may be barriers or factors that impede or degrade implementation of a component. A county may at that point decide to return to an earlier stage and revisit one or more components. Turnover of staff and of key stakeholders may require continuing efforts at education and development of support and commitment.

The staged model is designed to be flexible where it needs to be and be responsive to the needs of the APPDs and respectful of the diversity of situations that exist with the implementation of EBP.

## **Stages of Implementation**

Each stage of the implementation model has a number of component tasks. Each of these is described briefly. These are the key tasks that each county adult probation and parole department will be encouraged to follow. Technical assistance, training and resource documents will be available to assist the departments as they develop and carry out their implementation plans.

### ***Stage One Tasks***

- *Train probation/parole staff on principles of EBP and the Strategic Plan.*

Implementation of EBP is an enormous undertaking for a department. Staff at all levels must be informed about the project, why it is happening and what to expect, the major tasks and timeframes, changes that will happen, and implications for individuals and the agency as a whole. Staff should be afforded the opportunity to ask questions and obtain additional information. They should also be afforded the opportunity to participate in the implementation.

- *Provide EBP training for local stakeholders.*

The APPDs do not operate in a vacuum. The other major actors in the criminal justice system, typically represented on the county Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB), will be affected by the implementation of EBP and they should also be informed. Other external stakeholders include treatment and service providers, community groups, victims of crime, the community at large and the media. The information provided to stakeholder will typically be less detailed than that for the department staff and should be tailored to the stakeholders' interests and concerns.

- *Organizational Culture/Readiness Assessment.*

It is critical to gauge the readiness of the probation and parole department for the change that EBP represents. Structured assessments of the organizational climate and

culture provide detailed information which can help to increase likelihood of successful implementation. These surveys identify areas of concern and weakness which should be addressed prior to undertaking the implementation. A specific plan to should be developed to address areas of need or concern identified in the assessment.

- *Develop a County EBP Implementation Plan*

Implementation of EBP must be guided deliberately and systematically with a comprehensive plan. This should include an assessment of the department's status on all the EBP components. Some components may be present, but in need of review. Other components will be absent and will have to be added. A detailed plan should be developed describing what will need to be done and who will be responsible. The plan should proceed sequentially, installing foundational components such as risk and need assessment before implementing cognitive behavioral group curricula. The plan should be monitored and updated as needed as implementation progresses.

- *Determine Level of Technical Assistance Required*

Implementation of EBP will require resources which may not be available in a department. Needs for training and technical assistance should be developed for each component of the implementation plan.

### ***Stage Two Tasks***

- *Motivational Interviewing (MI)*

This component also has a dual focus. Departments which have conducted MI training should review the extent of use by staff and assess the quality of staff performance. Departments which have not implemented MI should develop a detailed training plan and plans for evaluation of staff competence, coaching and booster training.

- *Risk and Need Assessment Practices*

Assessment of risk and needs is the foundation on which the EBP model rests. If a department is not using a third or fourth generation instrument, they should examine

the *Risk and Need Assessment User's Guide: Volume #1*<sup>2</sup> to determine which instrument to adopt. In addition to generic risk and need assessments, departments should also consider specialized instruments for sex offenders, substance abusers, DUI offenders and domestic violence offenders. Implementation should include training, development of policies and procedures and monitoring staff performance.

Departments with risk and need assessments in place should review the performance of those instruments.

- *Effective One-on-One Interventions*

These include the *Four Core Competencies*, *Core Correctional Practices*, *Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS)* and the *Carey Guides* and *BITS*. Departments should assess each of the models and make a determination which best fits their need and capabilities. It is important to note that these three components (risk and need assessment, MI and one-on-one interventions build on one another and should be implemented in this sequence. Both MI and the one-on-one interventions take significant time to implement. It is wise to allow some time to pass after one is implemented and the next begun.

- *Case Plan Development*

The case plan provides the roadmap to the supervision strategy. It targets the criminogenic risk factors and structures the officer's time and activities toward meeting the goal of reduced recidivism risk. A state-level effort to develop a model case plan format for use by all counties will be undertaken.

- *Development of Caseload Structure*

Each department should review its caseload organization to ensure it conforms with the risk and need principles of EBP. This includes focusing resources on moderate and

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<sup>2</sup> The *Risk and Need Assessment User's Guide: Volume #1* was developed guide the adult probation departments in the selection of instruments for use at the various decision points. The goal is to ensure that departments select state-of-the-art instruments and to encourage a greater degree of standardization.

high risk cases, creating minimal service options for low risk offenders, developing specialized caseloads and organizing caseloads geographically.

- *Quality Assurance*

Over time, there is a natural phenomenon in organizations called *drift*. This happens after all of the training and attention focused on the new initiative fades and staff drift in their compliance with policies and practices. To combat this, agencies should devote time to creating and operating a system of Quality Assurance (also referred to as Quality Control or Continuous Quality Improvement) to monitor performance of staff and programs over time, provide routine feedback, conduct booster training and deliver coaching to staff as needed. This is essential to ensuring the fidelity of the implementation and ultimately the success of the EBPs.

### ***Stage Three Tasks***

- *Use of Group-Based Cognitive Behavioral Interventions*

These include the models included previously on p. 21. These programs can provide cognitive behavioral interventions to groups of offenders with a much smaller up-front investment of training. Several staff would be trained as facilitators to conduct the classes. Additional resources are needed for workbooks and supplies. Other issues to be considered is the scheduling of the groups (often after normal working hours to accommodate working offenders), staff compensation (overtime for hours worked outside or in addition to regular schedule) and facilities (having appropriate space available when needed).

- *Development of Graduated Sanctions*

Providing a structured approach to violations of probation and parole can improve outcomes and reduce the use of incarceration. Departments should begin the development process by compiling a list of violations, ranking them by severity. A list of available sanctions should be developed, ranked as well by severity. A matrix should then be constructed that ranks violations by severity, offender risk and then prescribe a

series of possible sanctions to be imposed. Line officers and supervisors should be heavily involved in this process. As the sanctioning of offender behavior involves the key legal actors, the development should also include judges, and the district attorney and the public defender offices. Training should be provided to all parties involved and the outcomes should be monitored.

- *Performance Management System*

Measuring agency performance and managing based on that information is another core element of EBP. It is not possible to be an evidence-based agency without ongoing measurement and monitoring. Departments should look to develop three core components:

*Process Measures* – these measure whether agency performance matches the expectations set forth in policy. In other words, did the nature and level of the services provided match what was prescribed? In the EBP literature, this is defined as *fidelity*, or faithfulness to the original design. Key policies and practices should be monitored routinely and examined to determine their degree of fidelity.

*Outcome Measures* – these describe the results achieved from the application of agency resources as prescribed by policy. Outcome measures should be established for the short, intermediate and long term. They should also measure outcomes at the individual case level, at the unit or program level, and for the agency as a whole.

*Feedback Systems* – information from process and outcomes measures only has meaning if it is used. Systems must be developed to provide information to all levels of the agency.

*Dashboard* – a popular feedback system is the dashboard. This is a user friendly model, akin to the dashboard of a car. A driver can see at a glance the key information about the car's performance without taking one's eyes off the road for more than a few seconds. The performance dashboard provides the agency



executive, manager or stakeholder a quick view of key variables of agency performance.

*Information Systems* – the emergence of three automated case management systems as the choice of 88% of the county APPDs presents an opportunity to work with these three vendors to develop standardized reports to support both EBP implementation and routine department management.

#### ***Stage Four Tasks***

- *Policy Alignment*

As implementation proceeds, departments should review policies and procedures to ensure that they are in alignment with the principles of EBP. Creating congruence between policy and practice reduces the chance of error or misunderstanding and increases the probability that high degrees of fidelity will be achieved. Departments should review their strategic plan (mission, vision, values and goals), agency policies and procedures, administrative regulations, statutory requirements, recruitment and hiring practices, training, and personnel evaluations to ensure alignment. Departments should also review the policies and practices of treatment and service providers to ensure that they are in alignment with EBP as well.

- *Gap Analysis and Service Matrix Development*

It is well established that few adult probation and parole departments have access to the full range of treatment and services which their offender population needs. These services are crucial to addressing the criminogenic risk factors that are driving criminal behavior of probationers and parolees.

To begin to address this problem, departments should compile data from needs assessments to create an aggregate profile of the treatment and service needs of the caseload. This can then be displayed with information about the available treatment and service capacity in order to identify gaps in services. These gaps can include

whether there is availability of the service at all, the type and intensity of treatment, the treatment models (not evidence-based), geographic gaps in service and costs. Such information can be helpful in discussions with service providers, with county and state human service officials and other stakeholders.

Service Matrices can be developed from this data as well, displaying for staff, judges and others the types of services available in the county and how they can be accessed. This can help to both increase the utilization of treatment and to ensure clients are matched with the appropriate service provider.

- *Sustainability*

One of the functions of management in the public sector is to ensure that public resources are well spent and that public value is created with those resources. Sustaining public value over the long term is a challenge as budgets often don't grow or are even cut, demands for service increase and new mandates are imposed. Integrating EBP into the agency culture is one means of ensuring that public value will continue to be created. Probation and parole executives must take proactive steps that will keep EBP at the core of agency operations, combatting drift and maintaining fidelity. A sustainability plan is a good strategy to seeing this accomplished.

## **Summary**

The stages of implementation set forth a logical, sequential model for implementation of EBP. The stages divide the implementation into more manageable pieces, making the process seem a bit less daunting. The model provides flexibility which allows counties with some prior EBP implementation to enter at the stages that fits their current status. The sequencing is deliberate, addressing the core prerequisite components first and then building on them to create a solid framework for implementation.

## V. Implementation Assistance

Assistance will be provided to the departments in six major categories. These are:

- *Implementation Guides/Manuals* – detailed manuals will be developed for the components of the EBP model, providing detail on the component, examples of policies and forms, training suggestions and other guidance.
- *Implementation Leadership Academies* – with the support of the PCCD grant, the Association contracted with the Alliance for Criminal Justice Innovation to provide implementation leadership training for CPOs and top managers. Three Academies were held in July 2018 and two additional Academies were held in May and June of 2019.
- *Motivational Interviewing Training of Trainers* – the Association contracted with the Center for Strength-Based Strategies to train APPD staff in Motivational Interviewing and certify them as trainers. As a result, 54 MI trainers representing 23 counties were recently certified and have begun conducting MI training in their APPDs. It is anticipated that these trainers will assist with regional trainings across the state.
- *Skills Training* – contracts will be executed with the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI) and with The Carey Group to provide skills training for probation and parole officers and supervisors. Additionally, the UCCI provides training of trainers, which will increase the capacity to provide training across the Commonwealth at reduced cost. The UCCI has agreed to modify their policy to allow any trainer certified by them to provide training for any agency in Pennsylvania. Previously, trainers were restricted to providing training in their own agency.
- *Training Network* – the extensive work on EBP implementation that has already been done in Pennsylvania by the APPDs, their juvenile probation counterparts and the adult parole system has resulted in the development of a cadre of experienced, certified trainers for many of the components of EBP. The Association will develop this network and serve as a clearinghouse for counties needing training. Departments will be encouraged to hold joint trainings with neighboring counties to make maximum use of trainer time and resources.
- *Technical Assistance* – Site-specific technical assistance will be available to the departments based on the available funding.

## **VI. Conclusion**

EBP has a long history in community corrections, with the roots dating back to the 1990s. They are well-proven practices that will help to produce less crime by offenders, fewer victims and create safer and healthier communities. Research and practice have shown that it is less expensive and more effective to provide supervision and treatment in the community.

While it is abundantly clear what needs to be done to implement EBP, the APPDs face significant challenges. Fortunately, a great deal of critical work has been done. The early adopters of EBP among the APPDs, along with the juvenile probation departments and state parole have forged a path and shown much of what needs to be done and how it can be done. This substantial experience forms an excellent foundation on which to continue to build.

The emergence of the science of implementation has come at the right time, providing proven practices and guidance for the hardest part of EBP – the implementation. New skills are required at all levels of the APPDs – line, supervisory, management and executive. The good news is that these skills are within the ability of existing staff to learn and master.

While implementation of EBPs is a significant challenge, the benefits are substantial and the risks are few. It is time to renew the commitment to EBP that opened this report. Ultimately, APPDs meet their community protection goals and keep communities safe by achieving long-term behavior change in offenders. This is the “why” of EBP in probation and parole.

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## APPENDIX ONE

### Overview of the EBP Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives in the strategic plan seek to enhance, over a three-year period, Pennsylvania's capacity to achieve its vision of public safety, reduced recidivism, and effective use of public funds for departments responsible for supervising offenders in the community. The following goals and objectives have been established:

#### Goal One

Establish the routine and effective use of actuarial assessments for purposes of pretrial and post-conviction placement and supervision, and programming.

##### *Objectives*

1. Create a brief user manual identifying and evaluating the best supported risk/needs assessments, including but not limited to proxy, pretrial, and risk/needs assessments and tools for specialized populations such as domestic violence, sex, driving while impaired, veteran, and female offenders; this manual would, at a minimum, include pros and cons of various assessments, costs, training requirements, and inter-rater reliability procedures.
2. Establish a mechanism by which Pennsylvania will endorse and support three specific third- or fourth-generation risk/needs assessments through technical assistance, training, and funding.
3. Validate and norm the selected assessments on statewide and local populations.
4. Work with the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing, and Supreme Court Rules Committee to create a model pre-sentence investigation template that includes risk/needs assessment information.
5. Implement a court-supported mechanism whereby probation departments are given authority to impose risk reduction with reasonably related non-punitive programming informed by the risk/needs assessment.

#### Goal Two

Develop an EBP Implementation Plan

##### *Objectives*

1. Develop an EBP blueprint/roadmap that describes the fundamental EBP activities to be encouraged in all counties (e.g., organizational readiness, motivational interviewing,

risk/needs assessment, core correctional practices, skill practice, cognitive behavioral interventions, service matrices, case plans, identification of drivers, dosage targets, effective use of rewards and sanctions, continuous quality improvement plans, etc.).

2. Establish EBP symposiums or forums for stakeholders to orient them to probation and parole departments' endorsement of EBP statewide.
3. Establish a phased-in training plan rollout that supports models of EBP that can be endorsed consistently throughout the state; consider collaborating with state parole and other correctional organizations, including utilizing shared certified instructors.
4. Develop a set of implementation strategies specific to rural counties.
5. Determine if a case plan template can be adopted for statewide use that would follow the justice-involved individual from pretrial to sentencing to local supervision to prison to reentry/parole.

### **Goal Three**

Establish, with AOPC, CCAP, PCCD, DOC, and PBPP, a policy and organizational infrastructure and technical assistance resources to support the successful implementation of EBP at the local and state levels.

#### *Objectives*

1. Assemble technical assistance resources to sustain the EBP implementation plan.
2. Establish statewide workload/caseload standards as a guideline for counties to effectively adopt EBP.

### **Goal Four**

Develop a funding plan to support and encourage the development, implementation, and ongoing confidence in the efficacy of evidence-based practices.

#### *Objectives*

1. Conduct a cost–benefit analysis of the EBP implementation plan using a phased-in approach, whereby counties implement the EBPs that they are in a position to support on an ongoing basis and build from each phase.
2. Define dashboard and performance measures to track EBP outcomes.
3. Develop a long-term information systems plan to conduct cross-system data mining.

## **Goal Five**

Develop a plan to ensure victims of crime are empowered, informed, notified, and made whole to the degree possible.

### *Objectives*

1. Create a process that provides information to crime victims in a timely manner.
2. Engage restorative justice programming, including partnerships with local and state victims service agencies.
3. Create a mechanism to inform and assist victims with opportunities to provide input and be notified of violations, release dates, etc.
4. Create a victim wraparound policy and procedure, and a domestic violence protocol.

## **Goal Six**

Develop a comprehensive and diverse communication strategy.

### *Objectives*

1. Identify the various stakeholder groups and contact persons related to the EBP implementation plan and determine if they need to be informed about, or give ongoing input to, the EBP initiative.
2. Devise a communications plan by customizing the message and format of communication for each stakeholder group; consider potential partnerships with communications experts.