

EBP SPOTLIGHT



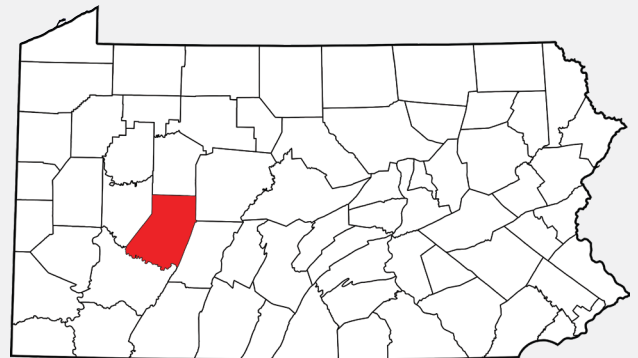
Improved Outcomes in Jurisdictions Large and Small

As any county embarks on the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBP), correctional leaders are often faced with numerous questions and challenges. Small jurisdictions look at their often limited resources, including low numbers of staff, inadequate funding, and lack of programming. Large jurisdictions point to complex processes and systems, large numbers of staff to train and coach, and significant costs. Both sizes of jurisdictions wonder if implementation is possible and if the positive impact will justify the investment of time and resources.

This spotlight looks at two counties, one small and one large, and describes their implementation accomplishments and, more importantly, the outcomes that have been realized—in one case, in a very short period.

Indiana County

Indiana County is a small county (Class 6) in western Pennsylvania. There are currently 12 probation officers. Even though some minor implementation of EBP occurred earlier on, the probation department began to fully embark on its EBP journey in the beginning of 2021. Leadership implemented numerous strategies aimed at increasing community safety and, in just over two years, have seen some positive outcomes.



RISK/NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

While most of Indiana County's officers had been trained in the use of the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), the tools were not being used routinely, effectively, or sometimes at all. The county implemented a policy requiring that the ORAS be completed at intake, and it restructured the department so that two officers would be administrative/intake officers. These officers administer the ORAS, work with people assessed as being at low risk of recidivism, and handle transfer cases. This restructuring has freed up other officers to spend more time in the field supervising people at moderate and high risk.

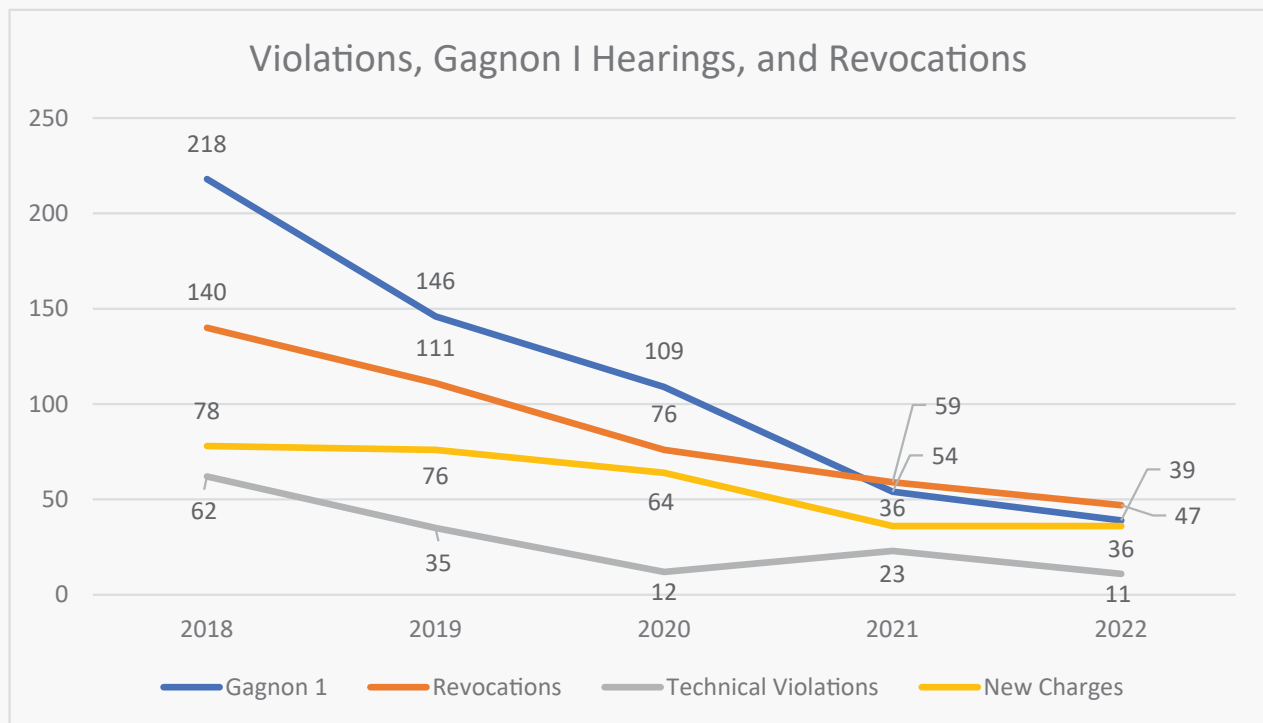
With the restructuring and focus on supervising people at moderate and high risk, supervision caseloads decreased from 170 people per officer to 90 people per officer.

FIELD-BASED SUPERVISION

Indiana County changed the model for supervision officers from a mostly office to a field-based model, providing the officers with county vehicles, laptops, hotspots, and cellphones. The focus shifted from “check the box” supervision to a more intervention-focused model, with a goal of reducing criminal and noncriminal violations. The theory was that, with this shift, officers would recognize and address any concerns or violations before they grew into situations that required Gagnon I or revocation proceedings.

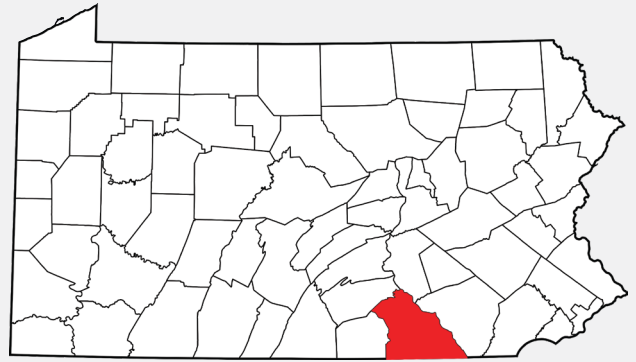
With field-based supervision, the percentage of contacts in the field increased from 8% to 87%.

The following graph shows that the implementation of EBP has already had a significant impact on the number of violations, Gagnon I hearings, and revocations in Indiana County.



York County

York County, located in southern Pennsylvania, is somewhat larger than Indiana County (Class 3). It currently has 84 officers assigned to adult probation. York County has been actively involved in the implementation of EBP since 2016, and has engaged in numerous endeavors, including the following:



INTAKE UNIT

Similar to Indiana County, York County created an intake unit. The unit consists of paraprofessionals who conduct the intake and complete the ORAS Community Supervision Screening Tool. This has allowed York County to shift the workload of officers from conducting timely intakes to conducting the ORAS Community Supervision Tool and supervising people assessed as being at moderate or high risk of recidivism.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

The department has six internal trainers and seven coaches certified in motivational interviewing (MI). The leadership team and officers have been trained in MI, and staff undergo regular trainings and boosters. In 2022, the department began to use tapes to provide feedback to officers to further develop their MI skills. The training team is trained in Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity coding to quantify the skill level of staff who submit tapes.

83% of staff have scored competent or higher on submitted tapes, exceeding leadership expectations.

NEEDS-BASED SUPERVISION MODEL

Officers have shifted from a purely surveillance supervision model to using techniques that address criminogenic needs and skill building. This includes addressing technical violations, especially those related to positive drug and alcohol tests, with effective behavior change interventions rather than arresting people and placing them in jail.

With a focus on behavior change interventions, the number of people arrested by probation officers decreased from 750 (2015) to 97 (2022).

EARLY TERMINATION

In 2016, the court approved an early termination policy, which incentivizes compliance and prosocial behaviors. Between 2016 and 2022, the court approved 1,101 people for early termination. Early termination has reduced both caseload sizes and recidivism rates.

Only 5% of those approved for early termination were rearrested within two years. This is significantly lower than the standard recidivism rate of 35–40%.

These strategies, plus several others, have resulted in significant positive outcomes, including improved community well-being and safety and decreased costs.

Cost Savings in York County

Caseloads
decreased
by

66%

\$1,382,500
in savings

Violations
decreased
by

67%

\$617,920
in savings

Jail population
decreased
by

45%

\$1,533,000
in savings

\$3,533,420
in total estimated savings