



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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Newport Community Policing-Community Corrections Partnership Program

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Overview: On 10/3/03, The Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) approved a research proposal submitted by Peter Benekos, Ph.D. to conduct an evaluation of the Newport Community Policing-Community Corrections Partnership Program. At the time of the project, Dr. Benekos was a visiting professor at Roger Williams University, School of Justice Studies and was the primary researcher for the evaluation. Chief Charles Golden of the Newport Police Department requested the evaluation through the Assistant Dean and Director of the Justice System Training and Research Institute of the School of Justice Studies at Roger Williams University.

Problem: The numbers of probationers and parolees had increased, thus supervision caseloads had likewise increased while offender needs had become more serious which (in the opinion of the researchers) placed people under the supervision of community corrections at an increased risk for re-offending, presented a threat to public safety and a challenge for the criminal justice system. In response to this trend, the Newport Police Department (NPD) and RIDOC formed a partnership between community policing and community corrections to target probationers residing in Tonomy Hill (now Newport Heights), and Park Holm which were both high crime areas of Newport, Rhode Island. At the time of this project (latter part of 2002) Rhode Island had approximately 21,055 probation and 523 parole offenders (RIDOC 2002) representing a state probation rate of approximately 3,049 probationers per 100,000 adult residents. Newport in particular had roughly 1 in 28 adults on probation and parole (Newport Police Department, 2002).

Project Description: The NPD and RIDOC program was designed to reduce recidivism by sharing resources, funding, and information to more effectively manage probationers/parolees by early detection of violations while providing wrap around services to them and their families. In addition, the joint initiative was aimed at better supporting victims and their families. The partnership was also aimed at directing adult probationers/parolees to appropriate social services, support successful completion of terms of probation/parole, and monitor probationers/parolees more effectively and efficiently. The objectives of the program for this population (probationers and parolees) was increased success rates, increased use of social services, reduce violent crime, reduce probation/parole violations, and reduce calls for police services.

Roger Williams University, Justice System Training and Research Institute conducted the evaluation of the project using data provided by NPD and RIDOC without contacting any individual probationers or parolees. The evaluation began in December 2002. Aggregate data included demographic information of offenders, number of officer contacts, nature of program referrals, number and nature of violations and revocations, number and nature of calls for police service, and reported crimes and arrests.

Research Methodology: The project was evaluated by (1) comparing crime rates before and after implementation of the NPD/RIDOC partnership project, (2) comparing probationers residing in the targeted neighborhoods receiving support from the NPD/RIDOC partnership program with probationers in the same neighborhoods who were receiving regular probation, (3) examining crime data for the target neighborhoods as well as crime data for the city of Newport. The baseline was established using crime

data beginning May 2002. The effects of the NPD/RIDOC partnership were measured using a time series analysis. In addition, neighborhood specific arrest data for the targeted area was compared with citywide arrest data. Moreover, the researchers compared a sample of those under the partnership approach with those under regular supervision.

Initially researchers expected that increased supervision and surveillance would result in increased crime, arrests, violations, and revocations. The researchers expected reduced calls for police service, numbers of reported violent crimes, and numbers of arrests compared to those prior to the NPD/RIDOC partnership. In addition, researchers expected reductions in probation violations, revocations, and incarcerations. They anticipated a reduction in recidivism as reflected in a reduction in crime for the targeted communities of Tonomy Hill, and Park Holm in Newport Rhode Island. Finally, it was expected that the partnership between Newport Police and RIDOC's Community Corrections would benefit the target communities, lead to a more effective partnership between the two agencies and safer neighborhoods in Newport overall.

Findings: The results of the evaluation were inconclusive. Researchers pointed to the type of information available for evaluation as a limiting factor affecting the assessment of the NPD/RIDOC project. In addition, they stated that some comparisons suggested the possibility of suppression effects on selected crimes in Tonomy Hill and Park Holm.

Researchers suggested that the initiative should continue and that in order to better facilitate future evaluation of the outcomes of the collaborative supervision efforts, the following should be considered.

- (1) Identify and track probationers residing in the target areas for "enhanced" supervision when they are sentenced to probation. The assigned probation officer and police officer should meet with the probationer to explain the conditions of probation as well as describe the enhanced supervision program.
- (2) Documentation by police officers participating in the NPD/RIDOC partnership should note the types and frequencies of activities they performed such as case review/discussion, office visits with the probationer, neighborhood surveillance/patrol, home visits, collateral contacts and treatment/service contacts.
- (3) Lastly, researchers suggested a measurement and comparison of outcomes of a sample of similar probationers who are not receiving "enhanced" supervision.

Nonetheless, they insisted that collaborative efforts such as this one are valuable and effective criminal justice strategies. They pointed to evidence from similar partnerships as support that "enhanced" community supervision of offenders can reduce crime rates (Leitenberger, Semenyina, and Spelman, 2003; Hagenbucher, 2003).