



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Planning & Research Unit

1 Wilma Schesler Lane, Pinel Bldg. 2nd floor
Cranston, RI 02920
Phone: (401) 462-3920 Fax: (401) 462-1507

American Probation and Parole Association Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Unit of the Probation & Parole Unit

American Probation and Parole Association
Ann H. Crowe and Andrew R. Klein
Completed 10/26/05

Overview: On 1/24/03, The Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) approved a research proposal by the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) in partnership with the BOTEC Analysis Corporation. The focus of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a specialized domestic violence probation supervision unit (DVU). In 1994, the DVU operated in half of the state, and traditional probation strategies were used to supervise domestic violence offenders in the other half of the state. The researchers started with the premise that greater supervision is needed for domestic violence probationers because of the extent and severity of their offense. In addition, the researchers opine that more research is needed to inform current supervision practices, which could lead to more effective probation supervision for domestic violence abusers.

Project Description: APPA and BOTEC compared high and low risk DV offenders. Low risk offenders were those who had been charged with misdemeanor domestic violence, no previous violent felonies, had not been prosecuted for assaulting the same victim, and considered as not posing a significant threat to the victim. There is an intensive unit within the DVU where offenders are placed who are considered high risk with risk decisions based on the following criteria: (1) repeat domestic abuser, (2) caused serious injury, and (3) history of substance abuse or mental health problems. A sample of 552 male misdemeanor domestic violence offenders on probation (370 under DVU supervision and 182 under traditional supervision) was selected and tracked from January 1, 2003 through January 1, 2004 in an effort to measure recidivism as indicated by a new arrest, victim report, or police report. APPA and BOTEC examined offender characteristics and behavior to determine differences between DVU and traditional supervision strategies.

Research Methodology: Their analysis included (1) descriptive analysis of offender characteristics, (2) analysis of survival times, and (3) regression analysis to determine recidivism and re-abuse probabilities according to risk. Information about the probation agency, criminal justice system, and state laws was reviewed to ensure that the quantitative analysis was performed within the proper context. In addition, researchers interviewed a sample of victims to gain a greater understanding on how probation officers may affect victims' experiences related to the probation supervision.

Findings: APPA and BOTEC found that a specialized domestic violence supervision unit would contribute to victim safety by reducing the likelihood of re-offending. Researchers noted positive effects on victim satisfaction and offender accountability. They found that there were several major differences in how DVU and traditional probationers were supervised by their assigned probation officers including, (1) DVU cases were seen more frequently, (2) DVU victims were more likely to be contacted by their abusers' probation officer, and (3) DVU probation officers were more likely to return probationers to court for technical violations.

APPA and BOTEC found that specialized probation supervision of domestic violence offenders resulted in significantly lower rates of re-offending and arrest-free periods were twice as long as compared to traditional supervision offenders. It appears that DVU probation officers tended to hold offenders more

accountable where 44% of the DVU caseload was charged with a technical violation compared to 25% percent of those on traditional supervision.