NEWS & VIEWS

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Federal Pretrial Services Prepares for the Challenges of the Future

by Data Analysis Branch Chief Timothy P. Cadigan, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services

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In This ISSUE

Special Issue

Federal Pretrial Services Prepares for the Challenges of the Future pgs. 1 - 2

Pretrial Risk Assessment Nears Full Implementation pg. 2

Initial STARR Results: A Positive Step Forward pgs. 3 - 4

Implementing STARR in Federal Pretrial Services pgs. 4 - 5

Success on Pretrial Release Predicts Success on Post-Conviction Supervision pgs. 5 - 6

Chiefs Advisory Group Works to Advance Pretrial Services' Objectives pgs. 6 - 7

Pretrial Services Working Group Tackles National Initiatives pg. 7

Pretrial Services Working Group Updates Supervision Policy pgs. 7 - 8

Pretrial Services Working Group Updates Investigation Policy pg. 8

Michigan Eastern Maintains a Culture of Release pgs. 8 - 9

Improving Pretrial Release Rates pgs. 9 - 10

Improving Pretrial Services' Data pg. 10

Culture, Research, and Learning: Core Elements of Informed Practice pgs. 10 - 11

Transitions pg. 11

Opportunities pg. 12

In 2012 the federal probation and pretrial services system will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Pretrial Services Act of 1982 and the 40th anniversary of the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies. The Pretrial Services Act of 1982 instituted pretrial services nationwide in the federal system.

This is by any measure an exciting time to be a part of federal pretrial services. The Pretrial Services Working Group, the Chiefs Advisory Group, and the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services are working to prepare pretrial services to meet the challenges of the next 30 years. Several concepts play a key role in the future of the federal system:

- Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)
- Performance and outcome measures
- Risk assessment
- Advanced data analysis and research

To encourage system-wide discussion, we present a special edition of *News & Views* that is devoted to these and other important topics.

While new concepts and approaches are exciting and can stimulate us in advancing the field of pretrial services, they are only tools to meet the long-standing mission of pretrial services: securing the release of defendants while protecting the community and safeguarding the judicial process.

More than 50 years ago, the Vera Institute of Justice defined this mission, which was (1) tested and proven effective in the federal system 37 years ago through research required by the Speedy Trial Act of 1974 and (2) instituted as law for presumed innocent federal defendants almost 30 years ago.

The application of EBPs is revolutionizing post-conviction supervision and is about to begin to revolutionize federal pretrial services. The pretrial risk assessment will be implemented by August 2011 throughout the nation, establishing the foundation upon which to build our EBPs in the federal pretrial services system.

Jurisdictions across the country are applying EBPs and seeing tangible results in the form of improved release recommendations, reduced failure rates, and improved employee satisfaction. And office cultures are changing. The Southern District of Iowa and the Northern District of Florida have refocused their core missions and implemented new practices that have produced positive results. Specifically, these districts have increased release rates while reducing failure-to-appear and rearrest rates.

No longer can supervision strategies be based on instinct or tradition. Federal pretrial services must be able to demonstrate how its risk-reduction supervision strategies (1) statistically contribute to

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ensuring that defendants appear in court and (2) protect the safety of the community pending trial.

The federal pretrial services system exists in a political environment that will no longer accept opinion about effective pretrial supervision. The implementation of Strategic Techniques Aimed at Reducing Rearrest (STARR) in three districts has shown real promise in this area.

While there is much work to do on our evidence-based journey, you will see in this issue that the tenets of an evidence-based program are in place:

- Risk assessment.
- STARR supervision.
- Research staff leading the charge.
- New supervision, investigation, and diversion policies drafted; under review; and, in some cases, complete and implemented.
- The pretrial release team program, which helps districts improve outcomes using data and research-based programs to reduce recommendations of detention while improving rearrest and failure-to-appear rates.

Pretrial Risk Assessment Nears Full Implementation

by Electronic Monitoring Specialist/ Director's Leadership Program Resident Olga I. Serrano (Illinois Northern)

The Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS) began implementing the Pretrial Risk Assessment (PTRA) in January 2010 and will conclude implementation in August 2011.

The PTRA is an objective and quantifiable instrument that provides a consistent and valid method of predicting risk of failure to appear, new criminal arrests, and technical violations while on pretrial release. The instrument comprises 11 scored and 9 unscored items.

The PTRA can help officers think more objectively and specifically about their recommendations based on risk principles and can help prevent the "over-supervision" of lower-risk defendants. In addition, managers can use the tool to manage and distribute supervision caseloads more equitably among officers.

The PTRA is vitally important to begin tracking defendants' risk levels because it forms the foundation of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) in your district. It also will enable your district to manage caseloads and treatment expenditures using risk, which is the backbone of EBPs.

OPPS launched a pilot of the automated PTRA in PACTS in July 2010 and released the automated version nationwide in November 2010. Since this date districts have completed 5,644 risk assessments. The risk score categories are as follows:

- **Category 1** - 1,140
- **Category 2** - 1,190
- **Category 3** - 1,598
- **Category 4** - 1,177
- **Category 5** - 539

A total of 61 districts (1,153 users) are using the PTRA, and more than 80 districts have been trained. All remaining districts will be trained and certified by the summer of 2011. In addition, OPPS has worked with the PTRA developers to add features.

While the tool will continue to remain static and applicable only during the initial investigation, upcoming features will allow districts to run their own data reports, complete additional assessments on defendants who may have additional cases where bond needs to be determined, or enter a new assessment for a defendant.

If you have questions about the PTRA, please contact me at Olga I Serrano/DCA/AO/USCOURTS.

Initial STARR Results: A Positive Step Forward

by Probation and Pretrial Services Administrators Christopher Lowenkamp, Charles Robinson, and Scott VanBenschoten, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services, and Chief Probation Officer Melissa Alexander (North Caroline Middle)

In May 2009 the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS) offered supervision skills (pretrial and post-conviction) training called "Strategic Techniques Aimed at Reducing Rearrest" (STARR) to the 16 Research-to-Results districts. This training focused on a series of officer skills that literature has identified as the most important to change offender behavior.

Each district provided a list of 4 to 10 officers to participate. From this list OPPS staff randomly selected 2 to 5 officers from each district to serve as a control group. The remaining officers (the experimental group) participated in 3-and-a-half days of training, returned to their districts, and began using the STARR skills with their defendants and offenders. Of the 16 districts offered this training, 13 accepted, and 3 chose not to participate.

Because implementation literature strongly supports the importance of coaching and feedback, officers were required to audiotape contacts with defendants and offenders. OPPS staff reviewed tapes to determine officers' skill in using the STARR techniques.

Over the course of a year, officers participated in seven telephone coaching sessions. We used these sessions to review the trained officers' use of the STARR skills and to further their understanding, development, and application of the STARR model. The pilot study and data collection ended late last year.

Although we are still collecting ongoing criminal history data on offenders supervised during this study, data on pretrial defendants was complete enough for us to begin preliminary analysis of the impact of STARR on defendant outcomes.

A total of 16 officers with a pretrial caseload met the conditions for outcome analysis. (These officers must have supervised moderate- or high-risk defendants both before and after the training dates.) Of the 16 officers, 9 were trained in STARR and 7 were untrained (the control group). We tracked the closure status of cases these officers supervised before May 31, 2009, and of moderate- and high-risk defendants supervised after May 31, 2009. The total number of eligible defendants in this analysis was 164.

For this study we defined failure as the failure to appear in court, revocation, or arrest for a new offense while on pretrial supervision. The results of the analyses are displayed in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 displays the failure rates for defendants supervised by the trained and untrained officers before the training. As you can see, the failure rates for moderate- to high-risk defendants is fairly similar across the two groups (i2 [1] = 0.123; p = 0.726). Because the way the two groups of officers supervised defendants is statistically indistinguishable from one another, this similarity is not surprising.

Figure 1. Failure rates of defendants assigned to experimental and control group officers before training

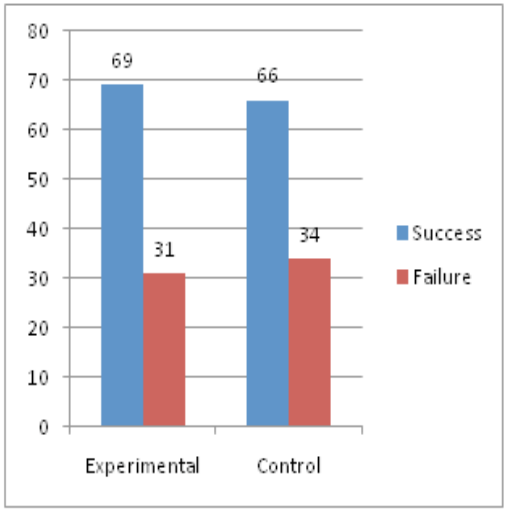
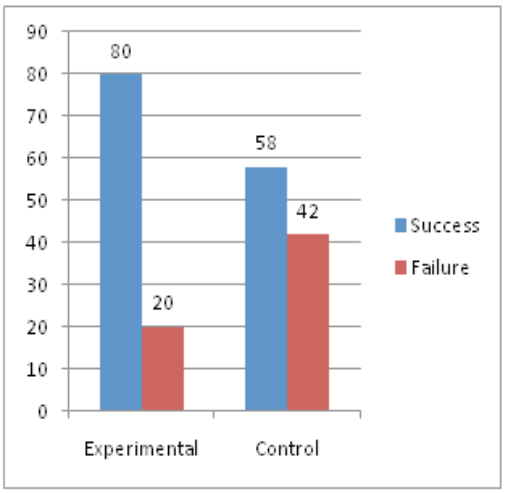


Figure 2 presents the failure for moderate- and high-risk defendants supervised by the experimental and control groups of officers after the training. The failure rates of the defendants supervised by the trained officers were about one-half of the failure rates of untrained officers. This difference was statistically significant at the p < .10 level (i2 [1] = 3.279; p = 0.070).

Figure 2. Failure rates of defendants assigned to experimental and control groups of officers after training



The results of this study are consistent with other research in this area that indicates the application of STARR skills is effective in improving offender outcomes. However, there are a number of caveats to note when reviewing the results of this analysis:

- First, the number of officers is small. Although we tried to accommodate for this by random assignment, we are not certain how representative these 16 officers are of the rest of the federal system.
- Second, some of the officers in each group (four of the trained and two of the untrained) were dropped from analysis because we could not identify any moderate- to high-risk cases assigned to them during the post-training period (based on a completed and valid RPI).
- Third, the total number of defendants included in the analysis is small. The control officers' pretraining group of defendants numbered 56, while the experimental officers' pretraining group of defendants numbered 52 (26 and 30 post-training, respectively). Nonetheless, these preliminary results are encouraging and are consistent with the extant research on the impact of officer approaches in dealing with those under supervision.

Given these findings we encourage districts to continue to experiment with the STARR skills and to evaluate the impact of these skills on defendant and offender outcomes.

We will be working with the National Institute of Corrections to develop STARR training and to make it available to federal, state, and local agencies.

Implementing STARR in Federal Pretrial Services

by Senior Pretrial Services Officer Susan Dely (Michigan Eastern)

In May 2009 pretrial services officers from Michigan, Hawaii, and Oregon attended Strategic Techniques Aimed at Reducing Rearrest (STARR) training in Detroit, Michigan.

Because our district has one of the highest release rates and one of the lowest failure-to-appear rates in the country, our staff are well seasoned to work with defendants at the pretrial level with credible results. But in the intense three-day training, we learned we could do our jobs even better and help defendants change their lives.

The initial training provided us with a set of skills to use with defendants. These component skills include role clarification, cognitive restructuring, problem solving, and modeling prosocial behavior. They also incorporate the effective use of reinforcement, disapproval, and authority.

When the "dance" of conversation occurs between the officer and the defendant, the results are encouraging. You get to listen, interject less frequently, and be attentive to defendants planning and implementing change in their lives. These skills apply to any office visit and easily intertwine with our roles as officers of the court.

One of my favorite skills is role clarification. I use it with defendants during their first office visit. It directs me to state my role, it clarifies the supervision process, and it allows defendants to set goals they want to accomplish while on bond. I believe this skill sets a clear standard of my expectations of the defendant and takes my role a step further in working toward a greater goal: to help initiate change in defendants' lives that could impact them forever.

STARR skills are less time-consuming than the old standby directive supervision. They also create less work for the officer because the defendant is more likely to follow through with a plan he or she developed.

STARR skills also can flow out of the doors of our office and into our personal lives. We can use them to talk to our spouses, children, family members, and others. We can even use them with e-mails or instant chat. They are relevant to everyday conversation.

During its research initiative, the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services continued to provide training via WebEx and feedback from audiotapes of interactions with defendants. The feedback has helped make us more efficient in using these skills. It was good to hear how officers around the country were using the skills and their struggles and successes.

Success on Pretrial Release Predicts Success on Post-Conviction Supervision

by Probation and Pretrial Services Administrator Christopher Lowenkamp and Data Analysis Branch Chief Timothy P. Cadigan, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services

For the past four years, the federal probation and pretrial services system has been working to implement an evidence-based or outcome-based approach in all four primary areas of federal probation and pretrial services: pretrial investigations, pretrial supervision, presentence investigations, and post-conviction supervision.

One of the cornerstones of this initiative is to build and compile the necessary data infrastructure so that we can effectively and efficiently conduct research. While that infrastructure is not fully complete, the power of the tools being constructed is readily apparent. With that comes the opportunity to address long-standing yet long-ignored research questions.

The opportunity to address such questions and contribute to understanding relationships between various components of the criminal justice system is particularly exciting. We begin the process by asking one of those questions: Does success on pretrial supervision predict success on post-conviction supervision? Of course, given the reliance on risk tools in both federal pretrial and post-conviction supervision, the research methodology must control for a defendant/offender's risk.

Bringing Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) into pretrial services is in its infancy. At best, agencies are beginning to consider the potential impact (National Institute of Corrections, 2007). Literature on bringing EBPs into pretrial services is either limited or nonexistent (Clark, 2007; VanNostrand, 2007; Cadigan, 2008). But *In Pursuit of Legal and Evidence-Based Pretrial Release Recommendations and Supervision* (VanNostrand, Rose, and Weibrecht, December 2010) takes a significant step toward addressing the need for evidence-based work in pretrial services.

Current research is based on 79,064 people who were released on pretrial supervision between October 1, 2000, and September 31, 2007. The pretrial services data was later merged with post-conviction supervision data where a matching record—generally an FBI number and/or social security number—could be identified. The joined file was then processed with a follow-up rap sheet or criminal record check and subsequently analyzed.

The following table presents information on the percentage of offenders arrested during supervision based on how they terminated pretrial release. The pretrial release groups include (1) Technical Violation Resulting in Revocation, (2) Rearrested, (3) Failure to Appear, and (4) Successful Supervision.

The table presents failure rates for pretrial release (columns) and risk categories for the federal post-conviction risk tool (rows). The failures are identified as having a new arrest while on post-conviction supervision. The "N" represents the number of failures, and the "%" represents the failure rate for that group.

Post-Conviction Risk Category	Pretrial Termination							
	Technical Violation		Rearrested		Failure to Appear		Successful Supervision	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low	103	14	43	14	16	11	1576	6
Low/Moderate	838	29	421	31	178	28	5365	18
Moderate	814	52	451	53	195	50	2942	40
High	524	63	227	63	140	63	1466	32
All	2279	38	1142	40	529	37	11349	16

As you can see, success on pretrial release leads to greater levels of success on post-conviction supervision. For example, the lowest-risk offenders—

- Failed 14 percent of the time when their pretrial supervision was revoked for technical violations.
- Failed 14 percent of the time when their pretrial supervision was revoked for new criminal activity.
- Failed 11 percent of the time when their pretrial supervision was revoked for failing to appear.
- Failed only 6 percent of the time when pretrial supervision ended successfully.

Even in the highest risk offender category, offenders who successfully completed pretrial release were nearly twice as likely to succeed as pretrial defendants who were revoked, with—

- 63 percent of offenders failing when their pretrial release was revoked for technical violations.
- 63 percent of offenders failing when their pretrial release was revoked for new criminal activity.
- 63 percent of offenders failing when their pretrial release was revoked for failing to appear.
- Only 32 percent of the pretrial releasees failing after successful release. In fact, success on pretrial release appears to correlate more with pretrial termination outcome than with post-conviction risk category.

This simple analysis demonstrates the tremendous capabilities our system will achieve as we bring pretrial services and post-conviction data together under this new infrastructure. We will enjoy a distinct advantage in leading the larger criminal justice community into a greater understanding of the interrelationships in and impact of pretrial services on post-conviction.

Chiefs Advisory Group Works to Advance Pretrial Services' Objectives

by Chief Pretrial Services Officers Chris Dozier (New Jersey) and George Walker (Central California)

Editor's Note: Chris Dozier recently completed her two-year service as a pretrial services representative on the Chiefs Advisory Group.

Coming on the Chiefs Advisory Group (CAG), we felt a great sense of responsibility to appropriately represent our fellow chiefs and to ensure that pretrial services' best interests were at the forefront of all discussions.

During our respective terms on the CAG, we have tackled many issues of importance to both probation and pretrial services, such as training, the budget, and the value of officer assistants, to name just a few. But no one issue came close to the high level of work and commitment needed to develop the new work measurement formula.

For much of the last two years, the CAG was focused on ensuring the creation of a formula that lives up to the sometimes varying expectations of our system and the Judicial Resources Committee. As pretrial services representatives, we were determined to ensure that our system's work received the attention, recognition, and credit it deserves.

As newcomers to the CAG, we had concerns that pretrial services is sometimes the "forgotten stepchild." We were determined to ensure that our collective interests would not be overlooked. But we were impressed and relieved to find a group of chiefs who were collectively concerned with all issues of our system.

As we worked through the elements of the work measurement formula, our fellow CAG members were a source of support and guidance. In the end we were pleased to have a formula that more accurately reflects the hard work and dedication of pretrial services. One important element of discussion and consideration concerned the gravity of the increasing and disturbingly high pretrial detention rate.

Important resources were added to the pretrial effort with the new Director's Leadership Program and the formation of pretrial release teams made available to districts. To increase awareness and gain support, we worked to ensure that pretrial services' needs and concerns were added to the agendas of the 2011 chief and deputy chief administrative meetings and the Magistrate Judges Advisory Group.

Although the executive branch bears the cost of high detention, our system is obligated to uphold the law and follow the tenets of the Bail Reform Act. Particularly, this demands that we fully represent the presumption of innocence and the defendant's protection from excessive bail. We must continue to push for improving our work.

Our thanks go to our previous CAG pretrial services representatives, Carol Miyashiro (Hawaii) and Holly High (Ohio Southern), whose strong advocacy laid the foundation for a much-improved workload formula.

We also thank both CAG chairs, Bill Henry (Maryland), a former pretrial services officer, and Avery Bossier (Louisiana Eastern), who provided excellent leadership for our system. Finally, we thank Assistant Director John Hughes, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services, and his staff for their support.

Pretrial Services Working Group Tackles National Initiatives

by Chief Pretrial Services Officer David Martin (Arizona)

In January the Pretrial Services Working Group met for the sixth time in two-and-a-half years. Our mission for each meeting is to review all national initiatives involving pretrial services. Following are some of the topics the group has addressed:

- Adopted the Pretrial Risk Assessment (PTRA).
- Revised Volume 8, Part B (Monograph 110) and Volume 8, Part C (Monograph 111) of the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*.
- Created the *Pretrial Services Data Quality Improvement Manual*.
- Provided guidance to the National Training Academy to update pretrial services' curriculum.
- Created standardized defendant queries for use in kiosk-based software.
- Clarified legal issues related to DNA collection, the Adam Walsh Act, and foreign passports.

The working group has significant goals for the future, including—

- Revise Volume 8, Part A (Monograph 112) of the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*.
- Expand evidence-based practices in pretrial services by developing guidelines and methods to assess program effectiveness. This includes implementing clear definitions in PACTS for pretrial success and failure.
- Renew the pretrial diversion program by exploring nationwide use, defining areas of concern, and developing a relationship with U.S. Department of Justice personnel to further advocate program advancement.
- Explore training mediums to educate staff about the significant changes in the Guide pertaining to supervision and investigations.
- Evaluate the use of Strategic Training Aimed at Reducing Rearrest strategies in pilot districts to determine effectiveness and expansion to other districts.
- Expand the use of release teams for districts that strive to increase pretrial release rates.
- Generate changes to be incorporated in PACTS Gen 3, including case plan features and identifying "over-supervision" based on PTRA scores.
- Create a statistical annual report in the Decision Support System with information sufficient to fulfill the requirements of 18 U.S.C. § 3155.
- Adapt workforce development goals to the pretrial population and appropriate the use of Second Chance Act funding.
- Refine the PTRA to include additional relevant risks, including foreign ties and defendants charged with sex offenses.
- Promote future federal tracks at the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies conference and relevant course adjustments at the National Training Academy.

I've enjoyed working with so many passionate professionals who are not timid about presenting their unique and diverse perspectives, ensuring that all sides of an issue are fully explored. Although there is much work ahead for the working group, I am confident that we will meet those challenges.

Pretrial Services Working Group Updates Supervision Policy

by Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer Elisabeth "Betsy" Ervin (North Carolina Western)

A subcommittee of the Pretrial Services Working Group was tasked with updating Volume 8, Part C (Monograph 111) of the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*. In addition to preparing a general revision, the subcommittee focused on individualized outcome-based and least-restrictive supervision strategies for (1) appropriately monitoring conditions of release and (2) addressing each defendant's risk factors.

Members removed from the monograph the low-intensity supervision requirement of a monthly phone call to the office. This obligation did not follow the

risk principle of individualized supervision. The most obvious change to Monograph 111 is the addition of Chapter 6, Treatment Services. The subcommittee adopted this chapter from Monograph 109 and modified it to ensure that no compromises were made to the statutory rights afforded pretrial defendants.

Chapter 6 brings pretrial services in line with evidence-based practices and will improve our supervision outcomes for defendants with identified risks of substance abuse addiction and/or mental health disorders. The chapter stresses that behavior change for defendants with these issues is a risk-reduction strategy. The chapter also outlines the specific roles of each party and addresses controlling strategies.

Additional updates reflect technological changes, including kiosks, web-based reporting, and electronic files; legal changes, including the Adam Walsh and Second Chance Acts; and perhaps most important, the introduction of the pretrial risk assessment to federal pretrial services.

After a thorough review by the Criminal Law Committee, the Judicial Conference approved the updates at its September 2010 meeting.

The Office of Probation and Pretrial Services, in collaboration with the Federal Judicial Center (FJC), is developing a program to train districts on the major changes to Monograph 111. Districts will be notified about the exact dates, and locations of training sessions will be announced as soon as they are available.

If you have any questions about the upcoming training, please contact Sentencing Guidelines Specialist *Karen Gilman* (Minnesota) (612-664-5445 or Karen Gilman/MNP/08/USCOURTS) or Susie Merchant, FJC (202-502-4256 or smerchant@fjc.gov).

Pretrial Services Working Group Updates Investigation Policy

by Chief Pretrial Services Officer Alma Irr (Texas Southern)

Over the past year, the Pretrial Services Working Group has worked to bring about much-needed revisions to Volume 8, Part A (Monograph 112) of the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*.

A subcommittee of the working group decided the best way to review Monograph 112 would be to dissect each chapter and reach out to officers to ascertain what changes were needed. More important, we wanted to know what additional guidance could be given to officers in conducting pretrial investigations and reports. Specialists and line officers provided invaluable contributions to the subcommittee.

A thorough review of Volume 8 indicated that it was not in sync with the flow of the pretrial services investigation and report. As a result, we made major numerical revisions to chapters and subsections for easy reference. We also moved subsections throughout Volume 8 so they were in direct correlation to the chapter. Officers will find all similarly-categorized information in one chapter. Other proposed revisions to Monograph 112 are—

- Changes to rebuttable presumption in 18 U.S.C. § 3142 (f)(1).
- Guidance for interviewing defendants charged with computer crimes.
- Links to memoranda about confidentiality regulations since the last revision.
- New language and guidance for the use/calculation of the pretrial risk assessment.
- Revisions to outdated investigative tools by substituting Access to Law Enforcement Systems and various Internet search engines.
- Revisions to ambiguous language that left officers' questions unanswered.

Updating a monograph is an arduous task but one the working group was ready to tackle. After a year of holding monthly teleconferences, the working group met for final revisions to the draft. We believe the final product incorporates the needs of both new and seasoned officers.

Michigan Eastern Maintains a Culture of Release

by Chief Pretrial Services Officer Alan Murray (Michigan Eastern)

Recently our district underwent a performance and outcome measure assessment that Dr. Marie VanNostrand conducted. That assessment demonstrated the high release rates of our pretrial defendants.

For many years our release rates have been significantly higher than the national average. For example, in 2009 and 2010 our release rates, excluding immigration cases, were 76.3 and 70.3 percent, respectively, compared to 46.7 and 47.2 percent nationally. And our detention rate of 29.7 percent was almost twice as low as the national average.

A number of people have made this possible. First and foremost are the pretrial services officers in the district who set the groundwork for these rates and the officers who maintain that tradition. Just as important are the support staff who bring errors to the attention of management and officers so that officers can present a quality investigation and report to our judges.

Other key contributors include magistrate and district court judges, federal prosecutors, and defense lawyers who are willing to listen. It is not unusual for us to meet with arresting agents before court or talk at the side bar with the magistrate judge during an arraignment, essentially doing everything necessary to come up with release conditions that reasonably ensure community safety or future appearance.

There are some unique and wonderful aspects to the work of pretrial services officers in our district. During their first week of employment, we give them copies of the Bail Reform Act of 1984, the Constitution, and the *Federal Criminal Code and Rules*. We also instruct them to use the words "alleged" and "defendant" in the same sentence.

Pretrial services officers are in the "risk business." We should never be persuaded not to consider bond just because a defendant is charged with a drug or gun offense. In Detroit we have seen a large number of drug distribution cases involving heroin/cocaine, we handle a lot of firearms cases, and we share a border with Canada, all while maintaining a culture of release.

There are several reasons why defendants on bond in our district show up for all court hearings, rarely get arrested for new criminal activity, and routinely self-surrender:

- Most of them have lived in the city or state for at least five years, and many were born here.
- Most are either unemployed or have financial challenges.
- Even though a defendant may have a prior felony conviction, we do not rule out release on bond.
- We don't view defendants with a history of substance abuse as drug addicts but as people who should receive drug treatment.

Our initial premise is not detention. We embrace the Bail Reform Act and what it stands for, and we always seek alternatives to detention. We start by recommending unsecured bonds and having defendants report to pretrial services in person. Face-to-face contact allows officers to make a connection with their defendants.

During office visits our officers discuss personal challenges a defendant might be facing, and we have collateral contacts with family members who reside with the defendant. We inform defendants of court dates, offer drug treatment and mental health counseling, advise of self-surrender programs, and provide GED classes.

While a defendant is on bond, we maintain contact with the prosecutor assigned to the case; timely report noncompliance to the judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers; and request violation hearings when necessary. We supervise defendants on a case-by-case basis, giving them the attention and respect they deserve, regardless of the charges.

The work of pretrial services is important to the criminal justice process and the community we serve. We take risks in this business because they are necessary to make a difference in the lives of others.

Improving Pretrial Release Rates

by Chief Probation Officer
Anthony San Giacomo (New York Western)

The Pretrial Services Working Group is sponsoring a release team visit program to help districts increase release rates. The team consists of officers from around the country and focuses on best practices to help districts best use their resources.

During each visit the team reviews bail reports and meets with representatives from the public defender's and United States attorney's offices, judicial officers, and select probation and pretrial services officers. Select staff receive questionnaires before the onsite visit.

The team develops training that lasts one-and-a-half days. Several telephone conference calls occur before the visit to ensure that the training is conducive to the district's needs. The team supplies the district with a final report with recommendations and measurable, realistic goals to attain. Following is an outline of the program:

- Review five to seven percent of the district's bail reports.
- Give a presentation on critical thinking.
- Develop best practices for the district.
- Analyze H Tables, including an examination of pretrial recommendations compared to those of the assistant United States attorney.
- Develop exercises and allow group participation.

The release team visited the Western District of North Carolina in May 2010. For feedback on this visit, please contact Chief Probation Officer *Greg Forest* at 704-350-7608.

For more information about the release team, please contact Tim Cadigan, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services, at Timothy Cadigan/DCA/AO/USCOURTS.

Improving Pretrial Services' Data

by Management Analyst Margaret Mowry (New Jersey Pretrial Services)

The Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS), at the direction of the Criminal Law Committee and the Chiefs Advisory Group, seeks to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal probation and pretrial services system by analyzing and reviewing data on existing procedures. Because we can make these improvements only when the data is accurate, detailed, and reliable, data quality is crucial to the success of our work. OPPS has developed a formal data quality program to guide and direct districts in developing a local data quality program.

The key to long-term success of your data quality program lies in the development and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures that reflect the program you want implemented in your district. To support this initiative, the Pretrial Services Working Group has developed the *Pretrial Services Data Quality Improvement Manual*. You can find this manual and all data quality program information at the Data Quality Improvement website. To access the website, please contact me (Margaret Mowry/NJPT/03/USCOURTS) or Dong Nguyen, OPPS, (Dong Nguyen/DCA/AO/USCOURTS).

To help you quickly identify the areas of information needed, the manual is broken out by PACTS function into 19 function areas. "Find Client," "Find Case," and "My Cases" are the initial 3 function areas. Each of the 19 function areas of the manual have 5 outlining areas:

- PACTS definitions
- Helpful hints
- Scenarios
- Data quality
- Data quality sequels

The outlining areas are relatively self-explanatory. They provide the user with clear definitions of key PACTS terms, helpful hints on how to effectively use each functional area, case-based scenarios to further define each functional area, data quality procedures for each functional area, and data quality reports to help districts ensure accuracy in their data.

Culture, Research, and Learning: Core Elements of Informed Practice

by U.S. Pretrial Services Officer Joe Zlatic (Missouri Eastern)

Within the past year, heightened attention has been given to organizational culture within the pretrial services system. This attention has largely stemmed from the realization that a "culture of release" exists or is being developed in many districts. While we have yet to identify all of the qualities that contribute to the development and sustainment of such a culture, the heightened release rates in the districts where such a culture exists testify to their commitment to reducing unnecessary detention.

Derived from academic literature, a common method of characterizing organizational culture is to separate it into three components:

Organizational Artifacts

Organizational artifacts are a group's surface-level sensory impressions that are identifiable at initial inspection, such as the technology a group uses.

The Organization's Espoused Beliefs

Espoused beliefs are best identified as the conscious-motivating factors of organizational action, such as the organization's mission statement.

The Organization's Underlying Assumptions

Deeply-held assumptions are the subconscious motivations for organizational action, such as a commitment to public service.

Some initial work has been done to identify and analyze the qualities that constitute a culture of release in districts. But we must conduct more research to further examine the practices, values, and beliefs that contribute to their higher release rates.

It would be unrealistic to think that every pretrial services office could replicate a consistent culture. But some offices have shown that uncovering tacit organizational assumptions and beginning a dialogue among districts and court personnel can help reduce unnecessary detention. Because these assumptions serve as the foundation for culture, they deserve intense scrutiny.

Although strategic and budgetary constraints could hinder such research at the national level in the near future, these constraints do not excuse inaction. Those in our system who possess knowledge and training in research methodology should use available resources to explore and evaluate such critical factors so that federal pretrial services can continue to advance its mission of becoming an outcome-based system.

By engaging in the continual cycle of planning-observation-assessment-action, we commit to bettering our system through informed practice. To do this we must be committed to learning effective methods. We also must regularly evaluate our current practices and alter our behavior in accordance with this knowledge. In doing so we further commit ourselves to the principles of justice, equity, and service upon which federal pretrial services is based.

TRANSITIONS

Deputy Chief Pretrial Services Officer *Donna C. Wilkerson* (Missouri Eastern) retired on March 31 after 23 years of federal service.

Donna became a federal pretrial services officer in 1988. She was promoted to supervisory pretrial services officer in 1997 and to deputy chief pretrial services officer in 2009.

You may contact Donna at the U.S. Pretrial Services Office, Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse, 111 South 10th Street, Suite 6.345, St. Louis, MO 63102.

Senior Probation Officer *Catherine Soto* (Texas Western) will retire on April 29.

Cathie became a federal probation officer in March 1989 in the Eastern District of New York. She transferred to the Western District of Texas in June 1996 and was promoted to mental health specialist in April 2007.

Supervisory Probation Officer *Joe Klingbeil* (Arkansas Eastern) will retire on April 30 after 24 years of federal service.

Joe became a federal probation officer in 1987. He was promoted to sentencing guidelines specialist in 1992 and to supervisory probation officer in 1995.

Joe served as a trainer for the Federal Judicial Center from 1999 to 2005. He also served on his district's pretrial task force. You may contact him at joeklingbeil@sbcglobal.net.

OPPORTUNITIES

Deputy Chief Probation and Pretrial Services Officer - Type II
Location: Iowa Northern
Salary: $96,690 - $133,389
Closing Date: April 15, 2011
Additional Information: See the vacancy announcement on the J-Net.

Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Location: California Northern
Salary: $107,693 - $155,500
Closing Date: April 18, 2011
Additional Information: See the vacancy announcement on the J-Net.

Chief Probation Officer
Location: Alabama Northern
Salary: $96,690 - $165,300
Closing Date: May 2, 2011
Additional Information: See the vacancy announcement at ***http://tinyurl.com/4drspwj***.

The following districts are accepting applications from federal probation and pretrial services employees who wish to transfer. Contact the chief in the district for details.

Probation

California Northern
Supervisory Probation Officer I
Supervisory Probation Officer II
Maine
Supervisory Probation Officer
Mississippi Northern
Probation Officer
Probation Officer Assistant
North Carolina Middle
Systems Administrator
Oklahoma Western
Probation Officer
Supervisory Probation Officer
Pennsylvania Western
Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Probation Officer
Puerto Rico
Probation Officer
Texas Northern - Fort Worth
Probation Officer
Texas Southern - All Offices Except Houston
Probation Officer

NEWS & VIEWS

Purpose
To provide news and information to employees of the federal probation and pretrial services system and to offer a forum for sharing experiences and opinions.

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Articles Welcome
We encourage federal probation and pretrial services staff and employees of sister agencies to submit articles to be considered for publication.

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