

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark polo shirt, is sitting at a desk with a laptop. She is smiling and waving her right hand. The background is a blurred office setting. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

APPA SUPERVISION STANDARDS

USING TECHNOLOGY TO DO MORE WITH LESS

RISK ASSESSMENT, RISK LEVEL, POLICY, AND IMPLEMENTATION

In today's world, corrections agencies are affected by budget reductions, staff shortages and staff resistance. In this webinar we will review the latest APPA supervision standards, their pain points for agencies, and managing implementation challenges.



AGENDA

- INTRODUCTIONS
- 2024 APPA STANDARDS
- WHERE DO I BEGIN?
- IMPLEMENTATION TIPS
- SUMMARY
- Q&A

TODAY'S PRESENTERS



William D. Burrell
*Corrections Management
Consultant, Burrell
Consulting, LLC*

An independent corrections management consultant specializing in community corrections, evidence-based practices, performance measurement, public management and organizational change. Bill has consulted, developed and delivered training for probation and parole agencies at the federal, state and county level across the country.

From 2003 to 2007, Bill was a member of the faculty in the Dept. of Criminal Justice at Temple University. Prior to joining the Temple faculty, he served for nineteen years as chief of adult probation services for the New Jersey state court system.



Jason Mereness
*Adult Probation Supervisor
at Ramsey Co. Community
Corrections in St. Paul*

Jason has dedicated over two decades to positively impacting countless lives and gaining a comprehensive understanding of the criminal justice system. He also contributes as an Adjunct Professor at Concordia University, St. Paul, sharing his wealth of knowledge and expertise with students.

Passionate about evidence-based practices, criminal justice reform, and the transformative power of technology, Jason has spearheaded successful initiatives benefiting clients, communities, and individuals alike. His innovative work in developing remote probation supervision during the COVID-19 pandemic earned him the esteemed "Technology Award" from the Minnesota Corrections Association in 2022.



Karen Peterson
*Senior Solutions Engineer
at FieldWare*

Karen has devoted the past 25+ years within the community supervision field and currently serves as the Senior Solutions Engineer for FieldWare.

She dedicated 23+ years as an Oakland County, MI Community Corrections' Supervisor, leading the Step Forward program for recidivism reduction using risk/needs assessments and evidence-based programming. She was a key player in the County Corrections' Pretrial Supervision program committed to meeting pretrial release national standards. In addition to FieldWare, Karen currently serves a trainer for The Carey Group in evidence-based practices.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Presented by William D. Burrell

APPA STANDARDS WE'LL ADDRESS TODAY

American Probation and Parole Association

National Standards for Community Supervision

June 2024



[Click to download.](#)

3.1

Agencies should adopt and implement empirically developed and validated risk and needs assessments.

3.4

Agencies should consider the use of risk screening instruments to quickly and efficiently identify individuals who score as low risk and can be assigned to minimal supervision caseloads.

“ *Agencies should adopt and implement empirically developed and validated risk and needs assessments.* ”

The efficacy of an RNA depends on the reliability and accuracy of its predictions and corresponding supervision guidance.

Determining how well a tool performs at predicting risk is called validation, and an RNA’s performance is referred to as predictive validity. Validation tests whether a tool’s assessment of estimated risk for an individual corresponds to actual behavior or outcomes. This requires additional data against which the tool’s aggregate predictive value can be tested. Best practice dictates the assessment be validated with individuals from the jurisdiction where the tool is being implemented.

Validation is a critical part of a risk tool’s development to ensure an instrument is robust and maintains integrity throughout future quality assurance processes. RNAs should be developed and regularly validated using supervision populations within the jurisdiction using the tool. As a practical matter, however, full validation is not always possible; at the very least, the design and implementation of data informed decision-making tools must focus on the principles of fairness, efficiency, effectiveness, and communication. The Guidelines for Post-Sentencing Risk Assessment provide measurements and a checklist for implementation of each of these principles.

A professionally developed assessment that has been validated using local supervision populations might also be a “reliable” tool even if the instrument was created using out-of-state cohorts of supervision populations. A decision-making framework ultimately translates these risk scores into release-condition recommendations, with higher risk scores corresponding to stricter release conditions. For instance, parole decision-making frameworks are less focused on grids requiring certain responses based on risk levels but rather outlines a process that demonstrates due diligence and defensible decision-making. An agency should review pre-established release or supervision condition recommendations with their own jurisdiction’s resource capacity in mind.



**DO YOU UTILIZE RISK
ASSESSMENTS TO HELP
DETERMINE SUPERVISION NEEDS?**

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS REPORT
On Law and Corrections Practice
ISSN 1072-5415
Volume 14, No. 3
Pages 33 - 48
March/April 2007

The Answer Is: Low-Risk Offenders
by William D. Burrell*

The American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) has struggled for some time with the question of the ideal caseload size for probation and parole officers (PPO). That struggle was first documented in an issue paper developed by the Association in the early 1990s.¹ In brief, the issue paper did not recommend specific caseload standards, but recommended that probation and parole agencies adopt a *workload strategy*² to determine staffing needs and caseload size on an individual agency basis.

The issue remains a contentious one, difficult to resolve and critically important to the field of community corrections. The APPA headquarters office regularly receives queries from legislative staffers and the media as to the recommended caseload size. The question of "what is the ideal caseload size?" has critical implications for the staffing levels of probation and parole agencies across the country. Absent any definitive national professional standards, ideally backed up by empirical research, policy-makers and funding bodies are left to muddle through the decisions about resource levels. Some probation and parole agencies have had success with the development and deployment of workload models and weighted caseload formulae, but for the most part staffing decisions for community corrections agencies are made in a relative vacuum of reliable direction as to the right or appropriate level of staffing. As a result, average caseloads in many jurisdictions are larger, often much larger than experienced professionals would recommend. Absent recommendations or guidance from the professional organization representing probation and parole practitioners, decisions about the allocation of resources to community corrections are left to the vagaries of the political and budget processes at the local county and state levels.

What is the Right Caseload Size? Question So Hard to Answer?

As the earlier issue paper noted, this seems like it should be easy to answer. "Why can't the professionals in a field, assisted by capable researchers, provide a definitive answer to the question of how many offenders a caseload officer should carry?"³ The answer, like the landscape of community corrections, is complex. The diversity of size, structure, geographical area covered, organization and clientele that characterizes probation and parole in the United States and Canada makes it very difficult to make definitive statements or recommendations that will apply to all, or even to a majority of the agencies. While probation and parole agencies use the same basic terminology and general practices, there are key differences that produce significant variations. These differences include:

- *Not All Offenders Are Alike* – they vary in their age, gender, offense seriousness, risk factors and service needs.
- *Not All Court/Parole Orders Are the Same* – Judges and releasing authorities vary widely in terms of the conditions they place on offenders, in terms of the number, complexity and workload demands the conditions place on the supervising officer.
- *Not All Jurisdictions Are the Same* – The statutory, political and policy environments of the hundreds of jurisdictions that provide probation and parole services vary greatly. The impact of these jurisdictional variations can have significant impact on the work of the PPO.

Based on all of the above factors, the case plan and supervision strategy for a given offender can vary significantly from one department to the next. As a result, it is difficult to prescribe an ideal caseload size

by William D. Burrell

The *Caseload Standards Report* gave rise to the Standards.

The *Community Corrections Report* article leads to examining low risk cases as part of the solution to large caseloads.

Adopting the caseload standards leads the question ...

How do we reduce caseloads?

LOW RISK CLIENTS

- Have a low likelihood of reoffending.
- Have a low need for services and supervision.
- They take up scarce and valuable PO time.
- Many of them have positive things going on in their lives – a job, supportive family, etc.
- Over supervising them can make things worse – increase recidivism!



“ Agencies should consider the use of risk screening instruments to quickly and efficiently identify individuals who score as low risk and can be assigned to minimal supervision caseloads. ”

A brief risk screening can provide quick information to CSOs about individuals who do not need a more in-depth assessment or intensive supervision or services, reserving resources for those with higher risk and need and avoiding over-supervision of those who are low risk, with protective factors in place. Whereas screeners flag an initial risk, fuller assessments that involve criminogenic needs might include a more official diagnosis and might require a trained professional to make further recommendations. Screeners serve to ensure lower-risk individuals are not referred to more intensive treatment, which is an inefficient use of resources and may even increase risk of recidivism. Research has found that low-risk individuals placed in minimal treatment programming have a recidivism rate of 15%, while placing similar low-risk individuals in intensive treatment programming increases the recidivism rate to 32%.

Screening tools have often been used in response to supervision agency capacity limitations. Where agencies use risk screening tools to quickly and efficiently identify individuals who score low risk and can be assigned to minimal supervision caseloads, the agency should use a similar development and validation process for both the full assessment and screener. Factors such as underlying offense and availability of trailer assessments should be considered when determining how and when to use screeners. Screeners should only be used to inform initial supervision categorization (e.g., contact frequency or supervision intensity) but the full assessment should inform the case plan (e.g., treatment/need-based referrals).

LOW RISK SUPERVISION IN FLORIDA



- Screen at Intake
- Assign directly to administrative caseload/telephone reporting
- No office visits – don't see or supervise
- Early termination application to court or parole board at 1 year – mandatory, don't leave it to POs



**DO YOU HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE
THAT DRIVE LEVELS OF SUPERVISION
BASED UPON RISK AND NEED?**



ISSUES TO KEEP IN MIND

- Keep your judges informed – early and often. Get their buy-in and support.
- Train your officers well on risk assessment instruments!
- Develop robust QA/QC capacity.



WHEN OFFICERS DON'T TRUST THE RNA, THEY TAKE SEVERAL APPROACHES

- Score and ignore – they complete the RNA and then supervise at the level they “feel” is appropriate.
- Manipulate the scoring of the RNA to produce the supervision level they “feel” is appropriate.
- They override the RNA to produce the supervision level that they “feel” is appropriate.

RISK ASSESSMENT OVERRIDES



Overrides almost always increase the supervision level.



Research shows that upward overrides to increased supervision do not result in lower recidivism than cases left at the initial supervision level. They have the same failure rates despite more supervision.

WE NEED TO TRAIN OFFICERS BETTER ON RISK NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

- What are these instruments?
- How are they developed?
- What is their track record?
- What do they tell you?
- What are their limitations and strengths?
- Actuarial instruments do better than human judgment, but they are not perfect.



EXAMPLES OF HOW OFFICERS MISUSE OVERRIDES

- They use information that is already in the RNA – prior record, for example. A PO would say: “look at the prior record, it clearly shows high risk.” Every RNA assesses prior history, don’t double count it.
- They use information that is unrelated to risk. Offense seriousness is a great example.



Civil liabilities

and Other Legal Issues for Probation/Parole Officers and Supervisors

4th Edition

Phillip Lyons
Todd Jermstad

[Click Here to Access at NCJRS Virtual Library.](#)

NIC Accession No. 027037

March 2013

THE REALITY OF GETTING IT DONE

Presented by Jason Mereness



- VISION

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

- MISSION

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

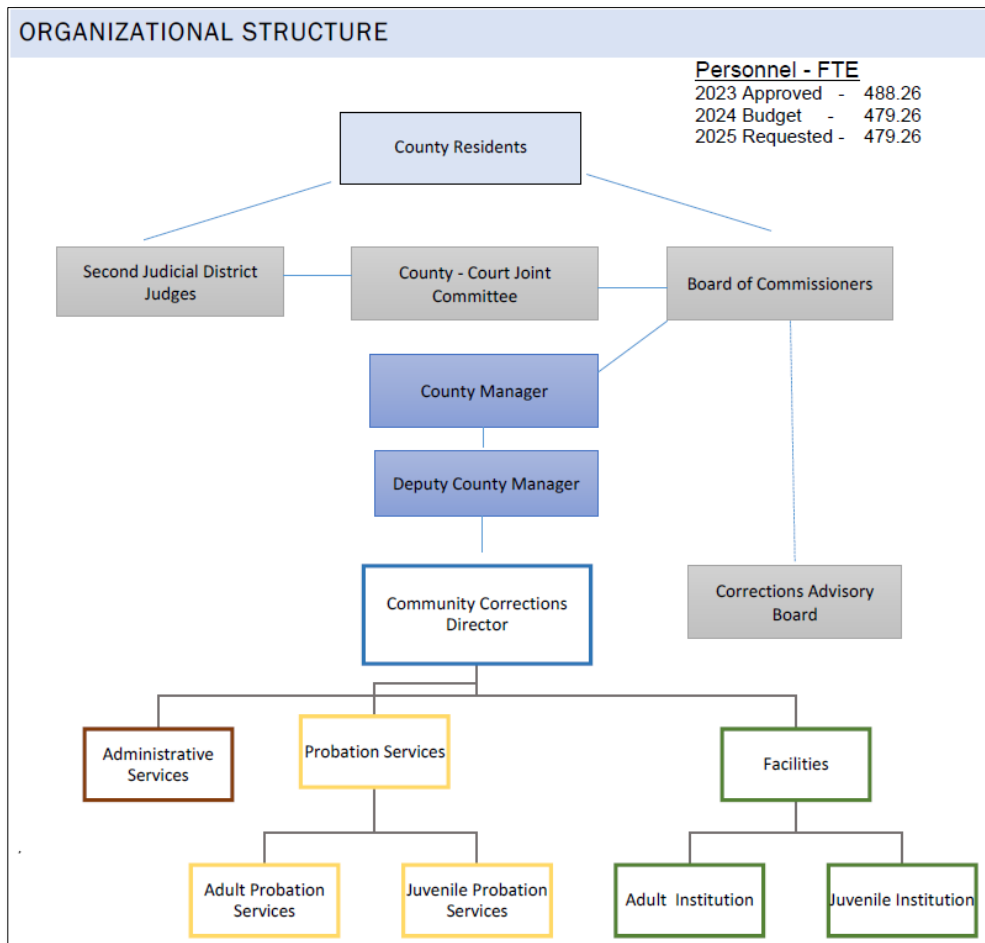
- LOCATION

Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area

Comprised of 18 cities and 1 township

St. Paul is largest city and state capital





COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS DEPT.

- Health and Wellness strategic team
- 7,000+ clients under adult probation supervision
- 3,000+ clients assigned to PSC/needing the least restrictive form of supervision
- Traditional field offices, specialty units, and Probation Service Center

DOING MORE WITH LESS

MAKING THE CASE FOR TECHNOLOGY



Limited budgets



Staffing shortages (recruitment and retention)



Flexible workplaces



Caseload and workload



PROBATION SERVICE CENTER (PSC)

GOAL - To remotely assist individuals in completing their probation requirements, while being responsive to their needs and busy lives.

Offers supervision services to adults on probation in Ramsey Co. that have been assessed as needing lowest level of supervision.

The PSC's supervision approach allows for contact with Probation on an "as-needed" basis and provides ...

- Team supervision with 1:1 support.
- Assistance in navigating the system and completing court-ordered conditions of probation.
- Information and referrals to other providers and resources.
- Convenient communication routes and reporting options (email, phone, and video).
- HOPE!



VOLUME OF PSC CLIENTS SERVED

Year (Snapshot as of Jan 1)	Count of Open Clients at PSC
2015	3,878
2016	3,827
2017	3,414
2018	3,061
2019	3,565
2020	3,570
2021	2,649
2022	2,280
2023	2,628
2024	3,043

NOTE: Numbers include clients on warrant status assigned to PSC in addition to those on 'active' supervision.

CASE ASSIGNMENT

Traditional Field Units	Specialty Units	Probation Service Center	Professional Overrides
<p>Cases are assigned to these offices <u>based on risk score or professional override</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">800 MinnehahaMetro SouthCentral	<p>Cases are assigned to these units based on matching offense type, <u>risk score</u>, or professional override.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Domestic Abuse Units 1 & 2,DWIIntakeCommunity AlternativesSpecialty SRISRPOR Probation	<p>Cases assigned to these units are <u>assessed as low-risk</u> at sentencing or after a period of supervision in a traditional or specialty field unit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">EastWest	<p>Overrides are designed to provide additional scrutiny, service, and supervision and are allowed when specific special conditions and/or aggravating factors exist.</p>



SUPERVISION STRUCTURE

- Support Staff
- Assistant Probation Officers
- Probation Officers
- Supervisors

“Teamwork makes the dream work”.



SUPERVISION APPROACH

- Assignment and review
- Orientation
- Monthly remote reporting
- Condition work
- Case reviews (180, 90, 60, 30 days)
- Case review office visits (CROV's)
- Step downs from the field
- PSC Gold and early discharges
- Court document writers & court coverage



LET'S LOOK AT RECIDIVISM IN RAMSEY COUNTY

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONAL PIECES

- New offense is a misdemeanor level or higher resulting in a conviction within MN State.
- New offenses are tracked from the individual's probation start date.
- The following recidivism follow-up periods are based on calendar time and are cumulative (e.g., individuals who reoffend within Y1 are included as recidivists in subsequent years.)

DATA TO SUPPORT THE PSC LOW-RISK

3 Year Recidivism by Probation Unit*			
	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
PSC	12%	20%	25%
Field	35%	48%	54%

1 Year Recidivism by Risk Probation Unit				
	Low	Medium	High / Very High	Not Assessed per policy
PSC	14%	24%	-	11%
Field	13%	27%	40%	-

**Rates are cumulative*



HOW ARE YOU CURRENTLY MANAGING LOW-RISK CLIENTS?

SURVEY FEEDBACK & QUALITY OF SERVICE

The most recent Ramsey County Community Corrections adult survey was completed in January 2024.

There were about 218 adults on probation with the PSC who completed the survey –about a 10% response rate.

Most respondents who had contact with PSC agents reported a positive experience.

- 99% agreed agents at the PSC showed them respect.
- 96% agreed agents at PSC cared about their progress.
- 92% agreed they could reach PSC agents in a timely manner.
- 94% agreed it was easy to get documents to PSC agents.
- 98% agreed they understood what they needed to do to get off probation.

NAVIGATING RESISTANCE AND GETTING BUY-IN

- Administration, Agents, Judges, and Clients
- Concerns about types of offense, client, supervision level, contacts standards, etc.
- Fear of change and technology



**WHAT PUSHBACK ARE YOU
RECEIVING FROM OTHERS IN
THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING STAFF,
JUDGES, PROSECUTORS OR THE
COMMUNITY?**

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

Presented by Karen Peterson

OTHER APPA STANDARDS TO CONSIDER

[Click title to download.](#)

5.2

Agencies should establish separate caseloads for individuals who have low scores on the risk and needs assessment.

Supervision in this category should be minimal, allowing for more resources to be spent on moderate- and high-risk individuals on supervision.

5.11

Agencies should develop and implement policies and practices governing the use of technology-based and/or electronic tools for supervision.

6.2

Caseload standards should be driven by the risk and needs assessment, identifying the level of risk of reoffending and the criminogenic needs requiring intervention, which will inform the time required on cases.

11.2

Process measures should track compliance with policies and procedures by staff at all levels, ensuring fidelity to the risk-need-responsivity theory model.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Start small.
- Identify your low-risk clients.
- Trust your assessment. Assessment tools provide a more accurate statistical probability of recidivism than professional judgment alone.
- Establish policies regarding supervision of low-risk clients that support ‘the why’. Drive consistency and support from the top down.
- Remote reporting – utilize technology.



Interested in options for remote reporting?
Reach out to us at FieldWare.

866-225-1394 | www.fieldware.com



Q&A



THANK YOU

FW FieldWare

BETTER TOOLS. BETTER OUTCOMES.

866-225-1394

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