

Supervising Female Parolees: Agent Survey Results from the Workload Study

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January 26, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to the parole agents who participated in this research and diligently completed study materials during the data collection period. The Workload Study relied upon the participation of agents and we were extremely pleased by the agent response we received. Thank you also to the many parole administrators and Unit Supervisors who worked behind the scenes to make it happen. A special thank you to agent Jahmal Prudhomme who pilot tested research materials.

Within DAPO, we'd like to thank the many individuals who have strived to improve supervision for female offenders, particularly Dan Stone and Maritza Rodriguez (both now retired). Helen Speed and Jon Stern both contributed ideas and guidance that shaped this research during its development. More recently, Mona Begell from the Fidelity Assurance and Outcomes Unit has assisted the research team enormously - her ongoing support and expertise is very much appreciated. Thanks also to Dan Warstler and Doug Eckenrod for their input into the study and ability to get things done out in the field. We also appreciate the support of the DAPO Executive Team for allocating resources to this project.

CDCR's Office of Research staff have, as always, provided invaluable assistance and advice to this research and our broader evaluation of the HEAL initiative. Thank you.

At CEBC, appreciation is extended to Dr. Sharon Farrell and Center Manager Jean Merrell for their assistance with this project.

GLOSSARY

CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
CEBC	Center for Evidence-Based Corrections
CPSRM	California Parole Supervision and Reintegration Model
DAPO	Division of Adult Parole Operations
DRP	Division of Rehabilitative Programs
FOPS	Female Offender Programs and Services
FOTEP	Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program
GR	Gender Responsive
HEAL	Housing, Employment and Linking Services
MBI	Maslach Burnout Inventory
PC	Penal Code
UCI	University of California, Irvine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This workload study was completed under a research contract between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the Center for Evidence-Based Corrections (CEBC) at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). The need for a workload study was identified during parole agent training on gender-responsivity (GR). During several two-day training sessions, parole agents expressed concern over the amount of time involved in the supervision of female offenders. Agents reported that, as a consequence of female offenders being more relational and having a broader range of criminogenic needs than males, females took more time. Agents perceived that face-to-face contacts with female parolees were longer, and that additional time was spent on activities such as speaking with females on the telephone and liaising with programs.

Workload that is too high leads to job stress and burnout. Burnout has been linked to decreased work performance, withdrawal from others, substance abuse, employee health problems, an increase in absenteeism, and employee turnover (Griffin, Hogan, & Lambert, 2012; Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1986). Agent burnout is thus costly to both employees and the Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO), and potentially has public safety impacts for society.

One component of the workload study measured the level of burnout, job stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived workload using a parole agent survey. Sixteen parole agents supervising female-only GR caseloads were surveyed (the GR group), as were 32 agents supervising regular California Parole Supervision and Reintegration Model (CPSRM) mixed-gender caseloads (the control group).

Key findings from the agent work stress survey:

- ✧ GR group agents had the same level of burnout as control group agents, but tended to score higher on personal accomplishment, which is a protective factor for burnout indicating that they find their work rewarding.
- ✧ Levels of job stress (moderate) and job satisfaction (moderately high) appeared to be similar across study groups. However, regression analysis controlled for the influence of other factors and found that GR agents experienced higher levels of job stress. In addition, job stress increased for GR agents as caseload size increased, and as agents reported needing more overtime. This was not the case for control group agents.
- ✧ All agents in the study reported high levels of organizational commitment, regardless of group. It is possible that agents selected by supervisors to implement GR caseloads or participate in the study as a control group agent tend to score more highly on commitment to DAPO.
- ✧ GR group agents perceived their caseload size to be slightly higher than control group agents, although all agents rated their caseload size and workload as too high. Agents in all study groups reported they could adequately supervise fewer parolees on a female-only caseload than either

a mixed-gender or a male-only caseload. Feedback from agents indicated that an appropriate caseload size for a GR female-only caseload was 35 parolees. This is significantly lower than the currently funded caseload size of 53 parolees under CPSRM.

- ✧ Consistent with rating their workload as too high, agents reported that they regularly needed overtime but that they did not speak with their supervisor or officially request overtime very often. GR agents perceived that they needed overtime approximately two days per month more often than control group agents.
- ✧ All agents were concerned about the impact of the size of their caseload on public safety and reported that the quality of parole supervision is negatively impacted by their current workload. There were no differences between groups.

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) currently supervises approximately 35,000 offenders on parole. Approximately 3,000 of these parolees are female. CDCR has recognized, as have other jurisdictions across the United States, that effective correctional policies must incorporate evidence-based reentry strategies such as responsivity in order to reduce recidivism. Female offenders have unique needs and pathways into offending, requiring a trauma-focused, gender-responsive (GR) approach from correctional agencies.

In July 2005, CDCR established the Female Offender Programs and Services (FOPS) office to manage and provide oversight to adult female programs. FOPS developed a GR, culturally sensitive approach to program and policy development to improve recidivism outcomes for the adult incarcerated and paroled female offenders under the supervision of CDCR. A master plan for female offenders was developed in 2008 with input from the Little Hoover Commission, legislative representatives, nationally recognized experts on female offenders, previously incarcerated females, family members of female offenders, and others (CDCR, 2008). This plan lays the foundation for making evidence-based decisions in creating gender appropriate policy, programs, and practice. In addition, it incorporates the requirements of Penal Code (PC) Section 3430 which identifies the duties of the CDCR regarding female offenders, including the implementation of GR training for staff.

DAPO is implementing the Housing, Employment And Linking (HEAL) services to reduce female recidivism initiative. The HEAL Initiative is a GR approach to reduce female recidivism that was created through a partnership between DAPO and the Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP). HEAL is a multi-faceted initiative that incorporates a range of existing CDCR services and new strategies into a coordinated and targeted approach aimed at improving outcomes for female offenders.

HEAL includes existing services targeting female offenders, such as re-entry hubs prior to release from an institution and residential treatment facilities such as the Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP) for females with a history of substance abuse. HEAL also includes a number of new services, such as female-only specialized parole caseloads and GR training for parole agents.

DAPO, through CDCR's Office of Research, requested research support from UC Irvine's Center for Evidence-Based Corrections (CEBC) to evaluate the effectiveness of HEAL. Our evaluation includes technical assistance to the development of GR training curriculum, a literature review on specialized caseloads summarized in a brochure, evaluation of GR training, workload study, prison gate to program door transportation study, and a study of recidivism and reentry outcomes for female offenders. The current report is one of several expected products from the HEAL evaluation.

WORKLOAD STUDY PAROLE AGENT SURVEYS

Procedure

Parole agents participating in the workload study were invited to complete a survey. The survey was designed to measure baseline levels of agent perceived workload and job stress immediately prior to the workload study, which commenced on April 1st, 2016. Agents selected by DAPO for the workload study were sent an email by CEBC containing a link to complete the survey online using Survey Monkey. Survey items and scales are briefly described in the table below (refer to the *Parole Agent Workload Study* report for full description).

<i>Demographic questions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Nine questions (e.g., age, gender, and education).✘ Used to describe the sample and test for relationships between workload study measures and demographic variables.
<i>Attitude toward role</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ The 7-item subjective role scale (Fulton et. al., 1997).✘ Measured whether agents focused on service/rehabilitation or enforcement/control.
<i>Job burnout</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ The 22-item Maslach Burnout Inventory, MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).✘ Measured three dimensions of burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.
<i>Job stress</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ The 6-item work stress scale (Cullen, Link, Wolfe & Frank, 1985).✘ Measured level of anxiety and pressure at work.
<i>Job satisfaction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ The 5-item job satisfaction scale (Lambert & Pauline, 2008).✘ Measured overall satisfaction in the job.
<i>Organizational commitment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ The 2-item organization commitment scale (Lambert & Pauline, 2008).✘ Measured sense of commitment to DAPO.
<i>Perceived workload</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Four questions.✘ Measured number of parolees on current caseload, ratings of caseload and workload, preferred caseload size, and self-reported use of overtime.
<i>Public safety impacts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Four questions.✘ Measured perceived impact of caseload size and workload on public safety.

Agent sample and group assignment

A total of 48 agents completed agent surveys for the workload study.

At the time of the workload study, sixteen GR caseloads had been implemented in California. All sixteen GR agents completed the survey and were included in the GR group. Thirty-two agents supervising regular CPSRM mixed-gender caseloads also completed surveys, to act as a comparison or control group. These agents were selected by DAPO to match GR agents as closely as possible (e.g., same gender, same parole unit). Five of these agents had a high number of female parolees on their caseloads (32% - 60% female parolees) and were included in a partial control group¹. The remaining 27 agents were included in the control group.

¹ We analyzed data to see whether the partial group agents were similar to GR or control group agents, to enable us to incorporate these five agents into the GR or control group. The partial agents did not resemble either group and were thus kept separate. In this report, when we compare across groups, we present data from the partial group in tables and figures but exclude this group from statistical analyses comparing groups, due to small N.

AGENT SURVEY RESULTS

Comparing the levels of work stress of GR group agents and control group agents

The agent survey measured role orientation and the work stress factors of burnout, organizational commitment, job stress, and job satisfaction. We compared the survey responses of GR agents with those of the control group to look for similarities and differences. The table below summarizes the major findings from our analysis.

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| <i>Role orientation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ There was no difference between groups.✘ Agents had a balanced approach to supervision, in which both rehabilitation and control are equally important. |
| <i>Job burnout</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ GR group agents had the same level of burnout as control group agents.✘ GR group agents scored slightly higher on personal accomplishment than control group agents; statistical tests found no significant differences between the GR and control groups on sub-scales or total burnout score. |
| <i>Organizational commitment</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ All agents in the study had high levels of organizational commitment to DAPO, regardless of group.✘ Agents responded positively to questions measuring how proud they were of the organization and the extent to which the job inspired their job performance. We do not know whether this high level of organizational commitment is generalizable beyond the study sample to all parole agents, or whether agents who have a high level of organizational commitment were more likely to be selected by supervisors to implement a GR caseload or participate in the workload study in the control group. |
| <i>Job stress</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ GR agents were slightly more stressed at work than control group agents, but this difference was not statistically significant.✘ Agents did not report particularly high levels of work stress, scoring around the mid-point on the scale. |
| <i>Job satisfaction</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ There was no significant difference between groups on job satisfaction.✘ Agents scored above the mid-point of the scale, indicating moderately high levels of job satisfaction across groups. |

Comparing the perceived workload of GR group agents and control group agents

We measured the number of parolees on an agent's current caseload (to ensure that this number was equivalent across groups), perceived size of caseload, perceived workload, number of female/male parolees agents could adequately supervise on a caseload, and use of overtime in the previous month. We also asked agents for additional comments relating to overtime. We compared the survey responses of GR group agents with those of the control group, and present findings in the table below.

<i>Current caseload size</i>	✧ The average caseload size was approximately 51 parolees for both the GR group (51.5) and the control group (51.3).
<i>Perceived caseload</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ On a scale from 1 (much too small) to 5 (much too large), control group agents rated their caseload size at 4.0 (slightly too large) and GR group agents rated their caseload size at 4.3 (between slightly too large and much too large).✧ The difference between groups was not significant but indicates that GR group agents perceive their caseload to be higher than control group agents.
<i>Perceived workload</i>	✧ On a scale from 1 (much too light) to 5 (much too heavy), both groups rated their workload at 4.3 (between slightly too heavy and much too heavy).
<i>Preferred number of parolees on a caseload</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ There were no statistically significant differences between groups.✧ On average, agents reported they could adequately supervise 41 parolees on a male-only caseload.✧ On average, agents reported that they could adequately supervise 35 parolees on a female-only caseload.
<i>Need for overtime and use of overtime</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ GR group agents reported that they needed overtime on 8.3 days in the previous month, compared with 6.1 days for control group agents (this difference was not statistically significant).✧ On average, agents spoke with their supervisor and/or submitted a request for overtime much less often than they felt they needed overtime; on average, only once or twice in the previous month.
<i>Additional comments on overtime</i>	✧ 32 agents provided additional comments. The most common reasons given for not speaking with their supervisor when they felt they needed overtime was the perception that the request would be denied (47% of agents responding) and that the process of requesting overtime requires too much effort (31% of agents).

Comparing GR group and control group agents on the perceived public safety impacts of their workload

Agents were asked several questions about their perceptions of caseload size and public safety, rating the extent to which they agree with statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Two statements assessed the relationship between number of parolees on a caseload and public safety; one statement examined the extent to which agents worried that they could not protect the public due to their caseload size, and one statement related to whether females posed less of a threat to public safety than males. Agents were also asked for any additional comments. Findings comparing GR group and control group agents are presented in the table below.

<i>A decrease in the number of parolees on caseloads would improve public safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ There were no statistically significant differences between groups.✘ Agents agreed with this statement (control group response was 4.3 out of 5; GR group response was 3.9).
<i>I worry that I am not able to adequately protect the public given my current workload</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ There were no statistically significant differences between groups.✘ Agents agreed with this statement (control group response was 3.7 out of 5; GR group response was 3.4).
<i>Caseload size has no impact on public safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ There were no statistically significant differences between groups.✘ Agents strongly disagreed with this statement (control group response was 1.3 out of 5; GR group response was 1.9).
<i>Female parolees are less of a threat to public safety than males</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ There were no statistically significant differences between groups.✘ Agents disagreed with this statement (control group and GR group response was 2.2 out of 5).
<i>Additional comments on public safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ 41 agents provided additional comments. The most frequent comment was that caseload size and associated workload was too high to provide quality supervision (56% of agents responding). Many agents explained that they often wished they had more time to work one-on-one with parolees and their families, and that parolees benefit when an agent knows their circumstances better and interacts with them more frequently.

What factors are associated with agent job stress?

We used a statistical technique called a regression analysis to examine factors that were associated with job stress. This method looks at the impact of a particular factor, *controlling for the influence of other factors*. The workload study included two study components: (1) agent surveys (reported here), and (2) Daily Activity Logs that recorded information on parolee contacts and agent allocation of time to various tasks (reported elsewhere). These two components of the workload study (agent survey and Daily Activity Logs) captured a large number variables that could be related to work stress, including agent characteristics, parolee characteristics, environmental characteristics of contacts, agent actions during contacts, and contact outcome. The goal of the regression analysis is to determine the extent to which these factors are useful in explaining job stress (please refer to the *Parole Agent Workload Study* report for a full discussion and results). For this analysis, we have included data from 39 agents who completed both the survey and the Daily Activity Logs. We exclude partial group agents.

Agent group

- ✧ Agent group was a significant predictor of job stress. Agents in the GR group experienced more job stress on average compared with control group agents.

Caseload size

- ✧ Actual caseload size (taken from agent rosters) was not significantly related to job stress. This may be because DAPO monitored the caseloads of participating agents prior to the study to ensure that they were operating at or around 53 parolees; consequently, there was little variation in the caseload size of participating agents.
- ✧ There was an interaction effect of group. Average job stress for GR agents increased (compared to control group agents) when caseload sizes increased. Consequently, higher caseload sizes caused job stress for GR group agents, but not for control group agents.

Job burnout

- ✧ Burnout was strongly related to job stress. As emotional exhaustion and depersonalization increased, so did job stress. Conversely, as personal accomplishment (a sub-scale of burnout that acts as a protective factor against burnout) increased, job stress decreased.

Job satisfaction

- ✧ As job satisfaction increased, job stress decreased.

Agent workload

- ✧ Perceived workload was *negatively* related to job stress. That is, agents who rated their workload as heavier were less likely to be stressed.

Need for overtime

- ✧ As expected, perceived need for overtime was positively related to job stress; as need for overtime increase, so too did job stress.
- ✧ There was an interaction effect of group. GR group agents saw an increase in job stress over control group agents for each additional day in which overtime was needed.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary, results from the agent survey showed that agents had high levels of organizational commitment, regardless of the type of caseload they supervised. When comparing agent groups there was no difference in burnout, although GR agents scored slightly higher levels of personal accomplishment, a protective factor for burnout indicating that they find their work rewarding.

Using simple statistical tests to compare across groups we found similar levels of job stress (moderate) and job satisfaction (moderately high). Using more sophisticated statistical analysis (regression) we found that, controlling for the influence of other predictor variables, there was a relationship between agent group and job stress. GR agents supervising an all-female caseload scored higher on job stress than control group agents. Increased caseload size was associated with higher job stress for GR agents but not for control group agents. A similar result was found regarding perceived need for overtime.

Consistent with previous research, we also found that job stress, burnout and job satisfaction were highly correlated. Agents who scored higher on measures of burnout had higher levels of job stress, and agents who scored higher on job satisfaction had lower levels of job stress. It is likely that if agents experience elevated levels of job stress over a prolonged period of time then they may develop burnout. The agent surveys were administered at the beginning of the workload study: GR caseloads had not been in effect very long. We recommend that further surveys of agents supervising GR caseloads be undertaken at regular intervals to monitor work stress factors in an effort to avoid agent burnout.

Another significant finding from the agent survey was that GR group agents perceived their caseload size to be higher than control group agents, and perceived that they needed overtime two days per month more often than control group agents. All agents perceived their workload to be excessive. All agents regularly felt they needed overtime but infrequently spoke to their supervisor to request overtime.

Agents felt they could adequately supervise an average of 35 parolees on a female-only caseload, and around 40 parolees on an all-male or mixed gender caseload. These caseload sizes are significantly lower than currently funded under CPSRM and again indicate that agents perceive their current workload to be excessive. Agents are concerned about the public safety impacts of workload, reporting that the quality of parole supervision was negatively impacted by their workload, and that lowering caseload size would improve public safety.

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