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Parole agent and supervisor feedback from the pilot implementation of the California Parole Supervision and Reintegration Model (CPSRM)

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Glossary.....	iv
Executive Summary.....	v
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Parole reform in California.....	1
The CPSRM pilot.....	1
Selection of pilot sites.....	1
Pilot site training.....	2
Pilot site implementation.....	2
2. CEBC EVALUATION.....	2
Process evaluation.....	2
Outcome evaluation.....	2
The aim of this report.....	2
3. METHOD.....	3
Structured interview questions.....	3
Sample.....	3
Timing of the interviews.....	4
Limitations of this study.....	4
4. FINDINGS FROM PA1 INTERVIEWS.....	4
Workload.....	4
Caseload size and description.....	4
Impact on perceived workload.....	4
New documentation procedures.....	5
Job easier or harder.....	5
Impact on tasks performed.....	6
Impact on face-to-face time with parolees.....	6
Appropriateness of contact requirements.....	6
Potential areas for reducing workload.....	7
Maximum number of cases.....	7
How agents feel about their job and DAPO.....	8
Training and ongoing support.....	8
Whether training was sufficient.....	8
Suggested improvements to training.....	9
Ongoing support.....	9
CPSRM policy manual.....	9
Changes implemented with CPSRM.....	10
Whether all CPSRM elements were implemented as planned.....	10
What was more difficult to implement.....	10
Parolee input into supervision.....	10
Identification of criminogenic needs.....	10
Agent style of communication.....	11
Use of Motivational Interviewing (MI).....	11
Use of rewards and incentives.....	11
Programming.....	12
Other changes to practice confirmed.....	12
Summary questions.....	13
Perceived benefits of parole reform.....	13
Perceived drawbacks.....	13
Impact on public safety.....	13
Parolee's point of view.....	14
Barriers and roadblocks to implementation.....	14
Further comments.....	15
Conclusions from PA1 interviews.....	15
5. FINDINGS FROM PA2/PA3 INTERVIEWS.....	17
Workload.....	17
Impact on overall workload and tasks performed.....	17
Management of caseload sizes.....	18

Maximum caseload size	18
Potential areas for reducing workload	18
Training and ongoing support.....	19
Whether training was sufficient	19
Suggested improvements to training	19
Ongoing support	19
CPSRM policy manual	20
Changes implemented with CPSRM.....	20
Whether all CPSRM elements were implemented as planned.....	20
What was more difficult to implement	20
Whether additional resources are required	20
Agent style of communication	20
Summary	21
Perceived benefits of parole reform	21
Perceived drawbacks.....	21
Impact on public safety	22
Parolee's point of view	22
Barriers and roadblocks to implementation	22
Determining the success of CPSRM	23
Further comments	23
Conclusions from PA2/PA3 interviews	24
6. FURTHER RESEARCH	25
References.....	26
Appendix A: PA1 interview questions.....	27
Appendix B: PA2 and PA3 interview questions	28
Appendix C: A brief description of action research	29

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GLOSSARY

AR	Action Research
BAK7	Bakersfield 7 Parole Unit
BPH	Board of Parole Hearings
CCR	Case Conference Review
CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
CEBC	Center for Evidence-Based Corrections
CEPP	Center for Effective Public Policy
COMPAS	Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions
CPSRM	California Parole Supervision and Reintegration Model
CSRA	California Static Risk Assessment
DAPO	Division of Adult Parole Operations
EBP	Evidence Based Practice
EID	Electronic In-home Detention
FTO	Field Training Officer
HQ	DAPO Headquarters
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
NRP	Non Revocable Parole
OD	Officer of the Day
PA1	Parole Agent 1
PA2	Parole Agent 2 (Assistant Unit Supervisor)
PA3	Parole Agent 3 (Unit Supervisor)
PACT	Parole And Community Team
PAL	Parolee At Large
PPP	Parole Planning and Placement
PRTF	Parole Reform Task Force
PVDMI	Parole Violation Decision Making Instrument
RNR	Risks Needs Responsivity
ROS	Record Of Supervision
RTC	Return To Custody
SAC	Sacramento (DAPO HQ)
SGV1	San Gabriel Valley 1 Parole Unit
SOMS	Strategic Offender Management System
SR2	Santa Rosa 2 Parole Unit
TP	Transition Phase
UCI	University of California, Irvine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parole reform commenced at four pilot parole units in August, 2010. These four units implemented the California Parole Supervision and Reintegration Model (CPSRM) into their supervision practices. Caseloads decreased significantly and agents adopted new evidence-based practices that were aimed at front-loading supervision services, engaging the parolee in the supervision process, and more effectively targeting and addressing a parolee's criminogenic needs that increased their risk of reoffending.

The Center for Evidence-Based Corrections at UC Irvine was tasked with conducting a process evaluation of the pilot implementation. We used a mixed-methods approach that used document analysis, surveys, interviews, and behavioral observation to evaluate how effectively the new policies were put into practice, and also measured the impact of parole reform on the attitudes and behavior of parole agents – that is, to see whether their style of supervision actually changed after reform was introduced.

This report presents findings from interviews with front-line parole agents (PA1s), Assistant Unit Supervisors (PA2s) and Unit Supervisors (PA3s) from the four pilot sites. All interviews were conducted in January and February, 2011, at which time parole reform had been ongoing for 5-6 months. All supervisory staff from all four pilot units were interviewed (N=8); in addition, fifteen PA1 agents were randomly selected from across the four pilot sites equally, to give a total sample size of twenty-three.

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain in-depth, anonymous feedback from pilot site staff concerning their experiences of parole reform part-way through its implementation. We adopted an Action Research approach for the interview component of the process evaluation, with the aim of applying the knowledge gained via interviews to further evolve the implementation of parole reform. The policies contained in the parole reform package have been refined during the pilot as they have been put into practice in the field. While other aspects of the UC Irvine process evaluation have employed a quasi-experimental research design to provide a level of scientific control (for example, by collecting baseline data for comparison purposes) the interviews gave the research team an opportunity to get detailed information on the experiences of parole reform that would (a) assist in the interpretation of findings from other research methodologies, and (b) provide DAPO leadership with 'food for thought' that would enable further reflection and refinement of the reform model. The goal of an Action Research approach is for researchers and practitioners to better understand the nature of the problem in order to take further action. As such, the 'findings' presented here are not an outcome in themselves, but merely part of the ongoing process of parole reform in California.

The first thing to note from the interviews was that the implementation process itself was successful, in that all components of the parole reform package were put into practice at all pilot sites. Supervisory staff at all pilot sites ensured that their agents adopted the new procedures, without 'cutting corners' or paying lip service to policies but ignoring them in practice. No interviewee could think of an area of parole reform that had not been fully implemented at their unit.

The DAPO parole reform team provided comprehensive follow-up support to assist the implementation process. While many suggestions were made to improve training sessions, the ongoing support provided as a follow-up to training (via email, internet, phone calls, site visits) gave pilot site staff the opportunity to clarify issues that arose and provide feedback that led to the refinement of procedures (e.g., reduced redundancy in forms).

The interviews provided anecdotal evidence that the new parole model was achieving aims relating to the front-loading of services, a better understanding of the risk factors (or criminogenic needs) that may contribute to reoffending, and perceived improvement in public safety. Approximately half the agents interviewed reported an increase in face-to-face time with parolees, attributed to procedures such as the comprehensive interview, resource contacts, contacts with family members, and more time spent at the residence. While agents were reluctant to report that they had changed the way they spoke to parolees (believing that they always showed the parolee decency and respect and therefore their personal style had not changed over time), it was the perception of supervisors that agents had improved the way they spoke with parolees. Many supervisors said that, in their opinion, the quality of agent-parolee contacts had improved. Most agents and supervisors thought that parole reform would be shown to have a positive impact on public safety.

Many agents could thus see the potential benefits of parole reform – reduced caseloads resulted in a perceived improvement in the quality of contacts, enabled agents to work closer with parolees, and provided agents with more information on parolees. The new forms and procedures (like the comprehensive interview and residence verification) front-loaded services and increased standardization across the department.

The other 50% or so of agents showed some resistance to change. Paperwork was seen as the biggest obstacle, even though steps had been taken to reduce the amount of paperwork overall and, in particular, decrease redundancy in forms. Many agents perceived that the additional paperwork introduced as part of parole reform had reduced the time they were able to spend in the field. It is likely that the continual 'tweaking' of paperwork based on agent feedback caused an additional level of agent effort – agents had to keep track of these changes, print new forms, and in some cases agents were redoing their paperwork to replace 'old' versions of the forms with the 'newer' versions, in order to keep their files up to date. It could be that this process

of refining the documentation requirements added to the perceived workload for some agents, and made them feel like the paperwork was too much.

It appeared that, all things being equal, the new caseload size of 48 was achievable, especially since some redundancy in paperwork was being reduced. However, workload was seen as problematic when anomalous circumstances arose – for example, when agents had to carry additional cases due to other agents within their unit being out, or carry additional cases of a higher supervision category (Transition Phase, Category A or B). If caseloads were to increase and some aspect of workload had to be cut to compensate, agents commonly nominated two areas that could be scaled back – goals reports (particularly for ‘old-timer’ parolees) and Case Conference Reviews.

An interesting theme to arise from the interviews was that unit leadership was important in overcoming potential staff resistance. A common finding in the literature is that staff with longer length of service within the organization may be more resistant to change. We did not collect background information on agent age, time at unit etc (to encourage interviewees to speak freely under conditions of anonymity) but certain pilot units, due to their geographical location, were more inclined to have veteran employees close to retirement. Agents from these units, however, were not uniformly more negative in their views toward parole reform than agents from other units. It seems likely that organizational factors (such as strong leadership and supervisor ‘buy in’) will be just as important as agent background in the acceptance of parole reform during a rollout.

The pilot implementation subjected pilot units to the scrutiny of audits and a rigorous quality assurance process to make sure that agents were ‘meeting specs’ and that any performance issues were detected and rectified promptly. Staff commonly reported feeling under pressure and micromanaged as they adjusted to parole reform, which may have contributed to their negative impressions of reform overall. The final observation worth noting from the interviews is that, when implementing organizational change, it may be beneficial for supervisors to be provided some leeway in extenuating circumstances to enable staff to adjust to the new system over time.

The feedback from pilot site staff gathered during the interview process provides DAPO leadership with valuable information that will assist in the further refinement of CPSRM. As noted previously, these experiences should be considered in terms of providing insight, rather than being considered ‘research findings’ themselves. The CPSRM pilot is ongoing, and further interviews may be conducted as DAPO proceeds down the path of reforming California’s parole system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Parole reform in California

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) currently supervises approximately 125,000 offenders on post-release supervision, or parole. California's rate of parolees per population, currently 438 per 100,000 residents, is much higher than the national average of 315 (Glaze & Bonczar, 2009). This is due in part to the large prison population in California, which results in a large number of offenders released to community supervision at the completion of their sentences. Two sentencing decisions contribute to California's higher-than-average number of parolees. First, determinate sentencing laws introduced in 1976 resulted in fixed sentences of imprisonment for particular crimes, followed by mandatory release. This compares with a system of indeterminate sentencing, applied in some states, which sets minimum and maximum terms but leaves the release decision to parole boards (discretionary release). Second, California historically has released *all* prisoners to a period of supervised parole, usually for three years, rather than reserving supervision for some offenders and releasing offenders assessed to be a lower risk to the community with no supervision requirements. With so many offenders under parole supervision, inevitably many parolees violate parole, either by committing a new offense or through technical violations of their parole conditions (e.g., failing a drug test or missing a meeting with their parole agent). The return to custody (RTC) rate for a parolee in California is 66%, nearly twice the national average (Fischer, 2005), and on any given day, six out of ten prison admissions in California are returning parolees (Grattet, Petersilia, & Lin, 2008).

In recent years, reviews of the corrections system in California have recommended reforms to implement evidence-based practices (EBP) into corrections policy. One common suggestion has been the targeting of parole supervision and treatment resources to those offenders most at risk of reoffending (Little Hoover Commission, 2007; Burke, 2009). Two recent legislative changes have altered California's parole system significantly. First, Senate Bill 3X 18 (Penal Code Section 3000.03), effective January 25th 2010, introduced Non-Revocable Parole (NRP), which placed 'lower risk, low stakes' offenders into the community with no parole supervision or parole conditions, but still subject to warrantless search and seizure by law enforcement. To be eligible for NRP, offenders must have no prior serious or violent felonies, a low or moderate California Static Risk Assessment (CSRA) risk score, and not be required to register as a sex offender. Consequently, parole resources were targeted toward those offenders with a higher risk to reoffend who were most in need of assistance with reentry. Second, legislation changed the funding of agent caseloads, reducing caseloads from a funding ratio of 70 cases per agent down to 48:1. These two changes - the removal of a proportion of offenders from parole caseloads and the potential to lower the number of cases that each agent supervised - resulted in a unique opportunity for DAPO management to reconsider the way it supervised offenders to incorporate recent developments in EBP research and 'best practice' policies being introduced by colleague agencies elsewhere.

In October, 2009, DAPO convened a Parole Reform Task Force (PRTF) to recommend new policies and procedures in light of research findings and supervision methods used in other jurisdictions. The PRTF comprised 19 representatives from DAPO Headquarters and all four parole regions, and included Parole Agents 1 through 3, Parole Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators, and Regional Administrators. The Task Force met weekly through January 2010 and produced a report describing the new parole model, called the California Parole Supervision and Reintegration Model (CPSRM).

The CPSRM represented a significant change to the way DAPO supervised offenders post-release. Sections in the report (covering pre-release planning, case management, case conferences, quality of supervision, agent workload, programming, parolee rewards and incentives, and parolee discharge procedures) carefully documented relevant research findings in support of the new practices outlined. At the crux of CPSRM was a move away from a 'surveillance' model of supervision towards an approach that emphasized both the quality of supervision, and the engagement of the parolee in the supervision process. Agents were trained in Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques and used detailed comprehensive interviews to identify the criminogenic needs of parolees. These criminogenic needs formed the basis of the parolee's case plan. Parolees were encouraged to identify tangible, small steps they could take every month in order to address these needs, and these tasks were written down in a Goals Report. Parolees were now invited to attend Case Conference Reviews, in which their case plan was discussed, and early discharge from parole was based in part on the level of commitment shown by the parolee in taking a more active role in his/her supervision.

Based on the PRTF report a comprehensive DAPO policy manual was developed. Current plans are that CPSRM will roll out state-wide. Prior to its widespread implementation, a pilot implementation took place at four parole units in order to test policies in the field and make adjustments based on agent feedback. This report presents findings from interviews with parole agents conducted during the CPSRM pilot implementation process.

The CPSRM pilot

Selection of pilot sites

Four parole units from across California – one in each of the four parole regions – were selected as pilot sites to implement CPSRM prior to its widespread introduction. The pilot units were Bakersfield 7 in Region I (BAK7), Santa Rosa 2 in Region II

(SR2), San Gabriel Valley 1 in Region III (SGV1), and Tricity in Region IV. Pilot units were selected on the basis of having Unit Supervisors or Parole Administrators who served on the PRTF. Consequently, the leadership of these units had input into the reform process and extensive knowledge of parole reform, which provided a logical place to begin implementation.

Pilot site training

CPSRM training took place at Region IV Headquarters, Diamond Bar. Agents and supervisors from the four pilot sites traveled to Diamond Bar at the start of each of the three phases for a 2-day training session. Training took place in July 2010 (Phase 1), October 2010 (Phase 2) and January 2011 (Phase 3).

Pilot site implementation

Pilot units officially commenced the CPSRM pilot on August 1st, 2010. Significant changes introduced by the pilot included a reduction in caseload sizes (down to 48 cases per agent), the reclassification of parolees into new supervision categories based on CSRA score, and new paperwork and procedures such as the Comprehensive Interview, Monthly Goals Report, Case Conference Reviews, and residence verification.

2. CEBC EVALUATION

The Center for Evidence-Based Corrections (CEBC) has been tasked by the CDCR Office of Research to evaluate parole reform. We will conduct two evaluations – a process evaluation, and outcome evaluation.

Process evaluation

The process evaluation will examine the implementation of CPSRM at the pilot units, and look at issues such as the development of policy and training materials, agent perceptions of training, the effectiveness of the implementation of individual CPSRM components, and changes in parole agent attitudes, knowledge and behavior. This evaluation will use pre- and post-survey measures, as well as interviews, document analysis, and an observational behavioral study that will measure speech patterns during agent-parolee interactions both pre- and post- parole reform. We will publish results of the completed process evaluation in a final report, once post-reform measures have been completed. We will also produce progress reports during the pilot implementation to disseminate findings arising from the various research methodologies as they come to hand. This report is one such progress report, intended to provide DAPO and CDCR management with timely information relating to the implementation process.

Outcome evaluation

The second evaluation will focus on outcomes, and will comprise a recidivism analysis to evaluate the effect of CPSRM on parolee recidivism behavior and, in turn, public safety. This evaluation will compare rates of recidivism for parolees supervised under the new model at the pilot sites with two control groups (1) parolees under regular supervision at four parole units selected by Regional Administrators on the basis of demography and caseloads as comparable to the pilot units, and (2) parolees who were supervised at the pilot sites in 2008 prior to the introduction of CPSRM (note that this historical control group was screened for Non-Revocable Parole and NRP-eligible parolees were removed from the sample). The outcome evaluation will analyze recidivism data for 12 months following CPSRM introduction, commencing August 1st 2010.

The aim of this report

This report presents qualitative data obtained via structured interviews with pilot site staff. This qualitative analysis will eventually be included in the final CEBC process evaluation report, where it will be consolidated with data and analysis from the other components of our evaluation. In order to provide timely feedback to DAPO on the progress of CPSRM implementation, this standalone report compiles feedback gathered from interviews conducted at the completion of CPSRM training, at which time CPSRM had been in operation at the pilot sites for approximately 5-6 months.

CEBC has made every effort to be impartial in its collection and reporting of interview data. We randomly selected PA1 staff to be interviewed, used structured interview pro formas to ask questions in a standard way, attempted to note responses from agents in their complete format, and attempted to incorporate all feedback into this report, without excluding comments based on our perceptions of their utility or appropriateness. As a consequence, sometimes this report is repetitive: if agents made suggestions during the interview that were covered elsewhere we chose to still include them, so comments on the same theme may recur in various places. Obviously, some feedback provided by agents may already be known to DAPO executive staff, have already been considered, and perhaps discarded for a variety of reasons (e.g., too expensive to implement). We hope

there are enough suggestions in this report for it to be useful and, at the very least, provide a detailed picture of the experiences of staff at pilot sites and keep the executive staff in touch with what is occurring at the ground level.

This report makes no recommendations. Our goal is merely to present decision-makers with feedback regarding the policies they introduced. We hope that the independence of UC Irvine, combined with the promise of agent anonymity, generated honest feedback that otherwise may have gone unheard. It became apparent during the interview process that the majority of agents cared enormously about their jobs. The feedback they provided was always thoughtful and heartfelt, provided freely in the expectation that their views might improve conditions both for themselves and their peers. Our aim was to include all feedback in this report; obviously, some of the suggestions will prove more useful than others, and, as mentioned previously, some may have already been considered by DAPO leadership.

3. METHOD

Structured interview questions

Questions were developed by CEBC staff to cover the various phases of CPSRM and its implementation. In early 2010, draft questions were provided to DAPO for consultations with labor. Since that time, minor adjustments to questions were made and a couple of questions were added to the pro forma. The final interview questions for agents and supervisors are provided in Appendices A and B.

We used an Action Research (AR) approach for the interview component of the process evaluation. Our aim was to better understand the experiences of parole agents at the pilot units. These experiences will be used to assist researchers interpret findings from other research methodologies used during the broader process evaluation. They will also help DAPO policy-makers reflect on the progress that has been made with parole reform to date, and refine their vision for the future of parole reform. A brief description of AR is provided in Appendix C.

Sample

From each of the four pilot sites, we aimed to interview four randomly selected agents (PA1s), the assistant unit supervisor (PA2), and unit supervisor (PA3). Consequently, six interviews were planned for each site. Due to staff shortages at the time of interviews at one unit, only three agent interviews were conducted at that site. The sample size for PA1 interviews was thus N=15, which represents approximately half of all agents involved in the pilot. An additional eight PA2/PA3 interviews were conducted, giving a total sample size of N=23.

In order to protect the anonymity of agents, throughout this report we do not identify individual units or agents, and we use only the male gender when reporting responses from both male and female agents in the sample.

In order to randomly select agents, we asked the unit supervisor to provide us with a list of agents at their unit. We assigned each agent a number (e.g., if there were eight agents, each agent was given a number from 1 – 8 in the order provided by the unit supervisor) and then used a random number generator to generate a sequence of five numbers. The first four numbers were used to select agents to interview; the fifth number in the sequence was used to select a backup, in the case that one of the selected agents was unable to attend the interview (we did not have to use any backups).

Several background questions were asked at the start of PA1 interviews to determine how long agents had been at the pilot unit, and how their caseload had changed since the introduction of parole reform. We confirmed that all agents interviewed had been at the pilot unit for the entire length of parole reform; a small number of agents were transferred into the unit in August 2010 just before implementation commenced, but most had been at the unit for a number of years prior to the pilot. We also confirmed that, generally, caseloads were at 48:1 at the time of the interview.

Similarly, we asked PA2 and PA3 staff several background questions to ascertain how long they had been in their current positions, whether they had been involved in the development of CPSRM prior to its implementation, and what their role was in the implementation of parole reform. Two supervisors had served on the PRTF. All had been at the pilot site since the implementation of the pilot.

With only one exception, all agents, assistant unit supervisors and unit supervisors were open and forthcoming during the interviews, providing thoughtful and seriously considered responses to all questions. It was clear that the conditions of anonymity enabled staff to talk freely about their concerns, complaints and ideas for improvement. Interviews took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete, although a few agents spoke for up to 90 minutes. Only one agent did not fully participate; although he agreed to be interviewed, he declined to answer some questions and provided short responses to others. We point this out not to draw attention to this one agent, but to make the point that agents were generally very cooperative.

Timing of the interviews

PA1 interviews were conducted at the pilot unit, usually in a private conference room or office with the door closed. PA2 interviews were conducted at the pilot units, on the same day as agent interviews. Again, they were conducted in a private office with the door closed. Interviews were conducted the weeks of January 31st (SR2), February 7th (BAK7), and February 14th (SGV1 and Tricity). Interviews with PA3s were conducted via telephone slightly earlier than the other interviews, since two unit supervisors had left (or were in the process of leaving) the pilot units. Telephone interviews were conducted the week of January 3rd, 2011.

Limitations of this study

The relatively large sample size and random methods of selection means that we should be able to generalize findings from the sample interviewed to the entire pilot site sample. Interviews were conducted after all CPSRM training had been completed, however, Phase 3 was only just being implemented, which may affect the findings relative to the discharge consideration process and rewards and incentives. One limitation of the interview data is that baseline interviews were not conducted – we do not know how agents felt about their job and workload prior to implementation. Interviews were also conducted at a time of uncertainty regarding the State budget, so if agents across the State were experiencing a drop in morale over perceptions about their future, then this may be reflected in these data.

4. FINDINGS FROM PA1 INTERVIEWS

Workload

Caseload size and description

Agents confirmed that caseloads now operated at a ratio of 48:1. There were a few exceptions and anomalies with caseloads reported. Several agents at one pilot site reported that they were carrying extra cases due to other agents within the unit being off work for a variety of reasons; one agent reported the extra number of cases as being between four and seven. At one site, reasonable accommodations were being made for an agent, resulting in that agent being assigned only Category D cases (reserved primarily for offenders in custody, in jail-based In Custody Drug Treatment Programs, civil addicts pending court discharge and gravely ill offenders). Consequently, other agents within the unit probably had a higher than expected proportion of Transition Phase (TP) cases (offenders are assigned to the Transition Phase for the initial 60 days following release), Category A cases (representing the highest level of supervision for Enhanced Out-patient Program offenders, those with a high CSRA score of 3, 4 or 5, and lifers) and Category B cases (reserved primarily for offenders with a moderate CSRA score of 2), which subsequently increased their workload. One unit also had a reentry court caseload.

WORKLOAD

"I'd rather have the higher cases than extra paperwork, to be honest"

"I spend more time in the office compared with talking to parolees or doing anything for them. I'm putting out fires. It's really hard to do good casework and spend quality time with parolees even though we're at 48:1"

"We're always the last people to leave the building"

"It's more manageable, in a quality way. But there's more paperwork in this program – I wouldn't be able to do it with the same numbers as before"

"I know my people better"

"The paperwork has increased, but it took some field away so it balanced out in the end"

Impact on perceived workload

Agents were asked whether their workload was now more manageable, less manageable, or about the same compared with before parole reform.

Eight agents (53%) reported that their workload was now less manageable, due to the increase in paperwork. There was a perception that the additional paperwork kept agents in the office and reduced time spent in the field. One agent reported that the workload related to each case had increased five-fold. Agents typically reported less time to do things due to the increase in paperwork. Several agents reported feeling stressed and overwhelmed by their increase in workload. One agent reported that, if out sick or on furlough, there was no cushion; work would be pushed onto other agents and there was more work to come back to after the days off. One agent said that the bar had been set too high, causing things to fall into gaps; another suggested that the timeframes for reporting increased the time he spent tracking dates and gave him less flexibility. One agent suggested that better technology would help ease the workload. One of the pilot sites was experiencing staff shortages at the time of the interviews; several agents from this unit commented that, due to the extra cases they were carrying, this unit was not a true representation of the pilot or a fair assessment of 48:1, and that this unit had no baseline.

Three of the fifteen agents reported that their workload was the same as before. These three agents all mentioned that the increase in paperwork was offset by the reduced caseload size, which balanced itself out. These three agents all commented that they now had

more paperwork/office time and less time in the field. An additional two agents reported that their workload was now both more and less manageable; an increase in paperwork made part of their job less manageable, but reduced time in the field made that aspect of their job more manageable.

Two agents reported that their workload was now more manageable than before. One agent acknowledged an increase in paperwork, but stated that his work was of a higher quality now. The other agent did not mention paperwork and reported only that parole reform had increased the quality of contacts.

DOCUMENTATION

"They have worked on revamping them, to their credit"

"I'm more of a clerk than I am an agent"

New documentation procedures

Agents were asked whether the new forms introduced with parole reform had made their job easier, harder, or about the same.

Seven agents (47%) felt that the new forms had made their job more difficult. Some commented on duplication/redundancy in forms, the sheer number of forms/volume of paperwork, and some mentioned they were "writing for days" due to lack of technology to auto-populate or cut and paste information. Among these seven agents the feeling was that the additional paperwork, although not difficult in itself, was time-consuming and took time away from other tasks, particularly field work.

Five of the fifteen agents reported feeling the same about the forms. However, despite this initial non-committal response, these agents went on to say that they thought the forms were of better quality, that they liked them, that they found it more difficult to adjust initially but it was easier now, and that the forms captured more personal information now. One agent also suggested that it was too soon to have the comprehensive interview at 15 days because rapport had not been established by then, so agents did not get honest answers from the parolee.

Three agents reported that the new forms made their job easier, commenting on the improved quality of forms and the improved automation of the CCR. One agent noted that it wasn't the forms per se that was the problem, but the volume of paperwork (especially when other agents were out).

Job easier or harder

Agents were asked whether parole reform had made their job easier in any way.

The majority of agents (N=9, or 60%) reported that parole reform had *not* made their jobs easier, mostly due to the increase in paperwork. Several agents reported feeling like they were under a microscope now.

Five of the fifteen agents said that parole reform had made their job easier. These agents mentioned the reduced caseload, increased standardization, more time to conduct searches and sweeps in the field, and the fact that there now wasn't such a wide variety of issues with a wide variety of people, which made it easier to focus on the little things instead of ignoring them.

The remaining agent did not provide a yes/no answer to this question, and reiterated that fewer cases resulted in less field work but more paper work.

Agents were then asked whether parole reform had made their job harder in any way. Most agents (N=10, or 67%) said that parole reform had made their job harder. They mentioned an increase in paperwork, 'make-work', redundancy in forms, an increase in stress, an increase in oversight from the supervisor, unreasonable specifications regarding the number of home visits, and a general feeling of things being too time-consuming. The phrase 'overwhelming' was reported by numerous agents, particularly from those agents carrying extra cases due to staff shortages.

Four of the fifteen agents stated that their job was not harder now. One agent said that parole reform "just makes you dot the 'i's and cross the 't's".

Again, one agent (the same agent as the previous question) reported a 'both' response to this question, but said that they did not like having their work constantly monitored and preferred the way things were before implementation.

JOB EASIER OR HARDER

"The reduction in caseload size makes my caseload more manageable"

"We're constantly being monitored. Now they are always on you. I don't like the looking over my shoulder, nitpicking. I'm more of an independent worker. I was already doing this – why try to fix something that's not broken?"

"The volume of paperwork. It's not rocket science, but the sheer volume is too much"

"It's overwhelming. What's a bigger word than overwhelming? Not obtainable"

TASKS PERFORMED

"The quality of contacts is now more involved. I spend more time making contact with the parolee. Prior to reform I was just putting out fires, running and gunning"

"I've got more paperwork. Documentation needs to be done and people held accountable but it has shifted my tasks. I have more office time and less field time"

"Home visits are more quality. I'm spending more time in the residence. They've increased the number of things they want us to check and note, so it's much more in depth than before"

Impact on tasks performed

Agents were asked whether parole reform changed the amount of time they spent on different tasks in their job.

All agents reported in the affirmative. Again, a common theme was that paperwork and time spent in the office had gone up, and field work had gone down. Many agents reported spending more time now on initial/comprehensive interviews and that this was a good thing. Other comments were that the quality of collateral contacts had improved, that the quality of home visits had improved, that more time was being spent at the residence completing interviews and residence verification forms, and that parolees were being seen more often up-front. Several agents also reported that parolee visits to the office had decreased, that phone calls from parolees had decreased, and violation reports gone down. Several agents also commented on an increase in travel time due to their caseload being far away.

A couple of agents expressed concern over safety issues for agents while at the residence; they felt that 20 minutes at the residence was unnecessary and imposed a risk to agents, especially when completing the pre-parole residence verification and there was uncertainty about the occupants of the house. An agent also raised concerns about a parolee not living at the address to be verified, and whether agents were trained to deal with this situation.

Impact on face-to-face time with parolees

Agents were asked whether parole reform had changed the amount of time they spent with parolees face-to-face.

Seven of the fifteen agents (47%) said that parole reform had had a positive impact on face-to-face time with parolees. Comments included that the initial/comprehensive interview increased time up-front, provided more information on the parolee and their family, and that supervision category changes resulted in more home visits and fewer mail-ins. It was a consistent view that the new documentation requirements gave agents more things to do, which consequently increased the time with the parolee, both at the house and in the office.

Seven agents (47%) reported no change to their face-to-face time with parolees. Some reported that they were not doing 20 minutes at the residence, as recommended, due either to safety concerns (they felt more comfortable doing the initial interview at the office) or not enough time in the day. One agent reported they had too much paperwork to spend quality time with parolees; another reported that, due to the nature of the parolees on their caseload, they spent considerable face-to-face time with parolees prior to implementation anyway.

One agent reported less face-to-face time with parolees as a result of parole reform, due to more paperwork and less field time.

Several agents commented that, due to either time pressure or their caseload being far away, they were calling the house prior to the home visit to ensure the parolee was home, or scheduling home visits with the parolee. These agents recognized that this practice was a 'work-around' but they felt they had no choice.

Appropriateness of contact requirements

Agents were asked whether the contact requirements under parole reform were appropriate.

Ten agents (67%) thought they were. Two of these agents, however, thought that there was sometimes inconsistency between a parolee's CSRA score and their supervision category. One agent reported that he worried about Category C parolees (under the new system) who used to be second strikers (under the old system), and who he used to see 2-3 times per month.

Five of the fifteen agents responded that contact requirements were not appropriate. Two of these agents also made comments about inconsistency between a parolee's CSRA score and their supervision category. One agent expressed concern about the unbalanced mix of supervision categories on his caseload (due to reasonable accommodations being made for one agent at the unit, all other agents had no Category D cases). Another agent thought that the contact specifications for supervision

FACE-TO-FACE TIME

"I spend more time getting information from parolees and their family members, and setting goals with them"

"I'm seeing them more often during the initial phase of release – more collateral contacts, more paperwork"

"The more you have face-to-face, the more they're going to trust you. It gives you a better idea of how they're doing, what their environment is like"

categories should be altered, reducing the number of home visits for higher risk categories from twice a month down to once a month, while at the same time increasing the contact requirements for 'mail-ins' to include a home visit (rather than no face-to-face contact with agents).

When asked whether they ever had difficulty meeting the minimum number of contacts, most agents (N=11, or 73%) had not. Some agents mentioned that they sometimes had to choose between completing paperwork on time or meeting specifications, and they chose to meet their contact requirements at a cost to other work. The remaining four agents talked of occasional difficulty with resource contacts especially when the parolee already had a job, with meeting specifications when other agents within the unit were out, feeling overwhelmed, having too much paperwork to achieve the desired number of visits, inconsistency of interpretation among supervisory staff concerning certain contacts resulting in no clear direction for agents, and difficulty doing unannounced visits at home if the parolee had full-time work.

REDUCING WORKLOAD

"The goals sheet has no significant value in the supervision of the parolee. Anyone can write down goals, but for a parolee to act on them isn't going to happen"

"If the expectation is that we'll maintain this level of intensity with all cases, then you'll see an increase in the number of agents going out on stress. I have a strong work ethic, but it's insurmountable, you cannot do it"

"Drop the CCR. Period. It serves no purpose"

Potential areas for reducing workload

Agents were asked to consider the hypothetical scenario of their caseload increasing and to nominate components (if any) of parole reform they thought could be dropped to manage their workload. They were also asked to provide reasons as to why this component was less important. Agents could nominate a single practice that they thought could be cut, or multiple practices; alternately they could say that no area could be dropped without significantly impacting parole reform as a whole.

The quarterly (previously monthly) goals sheet was the most commonly cited component for potential removal – 8 agents mentioned this. Agents commented that they had yet to have a parolee set a true goal and complete it, that model parolees who were working don't need to do goals, that it won't work with certain parolees, that it was redundant because of the case plan, that it was difficult to track, that there were no sanctions for failing to participate, and that it should be discretionary. The CCR was mentioned by 6 agents. They made comments such as the parolee wasn't showing up, most TP cases end up as Category A anyway so it was a waste of time, and that the form was too long. Six agents mentioned tweaking the supervision categories, predominantly lowering the specifications to one home visit per month and further limiting the number of TP and Category A/B cases per agent, reducing the number of collateral contacts, or changing the category movement policy to reflect an immediate change (as opposed to waiting until the end of the month, such that a parolee may still require an additional home contact that month). Four agents slated the residence verification for removal, stating that most of the time the inmate does not return to the address verified anyway, and that it was time-consuming to complete for parolees who move often ('frequent flyers'). A couple of agents did not like doing COM-

PAS assessments, either because they were too time consuming or it was difficult to keep track of start/end dates. One agent commented that doing an initial/comprehensive interview upon every release was redundant if the parolee had returned to parolee after only a short time of incarceration and had an interview done a short time previously.

Maximum number of cases

When asked to state how many cases they could manage comfortably at the moment, four agents thought that 48 was the maximum they could handle.

Another four agents thought fewer cases would be optimal (three of these agents reported 40 cases would be comfortable, while one agent did not cite a figure and merely said "less than 48").

On the other hand, six agents reported that caseloads could go up to 55 (two agents) or 60 (two agents). However, four of these agents hedged their responses by saying that caseload size could increase *only if* other 'fixes' were made (for example, more balance between supervision categories, less paperwork, and other less successful components of parole reform removed). One agent reiterated that the pilot at his unit was not a fair assessment of caseload size due to several agents being out.

One agent in the sample (who was less forthcoming with the interview) made a broad statement here reflecting his general feeling of discontent, but would not elaborate.

MAXIMUM CASELOAD

"If they want everything to be done we need more time to spend with parolees. So you have to cut cases"

"48-55 is reasonable if they take out some of the paperwork. Have had up to 80 or so before, but quality goes down. You get better quality with lower numbers"

"55-60 if balanced out to a fair ratio. If it's all As and Bs then 40"

FEELINGS ABOUT THE JOB

"I don't like my job. At the end of the day I haven't accomplished anything or helped anybody. I'm just doing paperwork"

"I freaking hate my job. I know there are so many tasks I can't do because I don't have enough time to do them"

"I'm looking forward to retire. I don't like coming to work due to parole reform. I'm trying to get out. But I love my job"

"I've come from probation – this is stuff I was doing already. We've been doing this the whole time, just not documenting it"

"Seemed like they wanted to make us happy by reducing caseloads. So the goal had a good intent"

"I put a very positive spin on this. When you work closer with some of the guys it has a more lasting effect on them. We give them more positive reinforcement now and more incentives. I've noticed a change in some of the attitudes of parolees – it's more positive"

"The success of parole reform ultimately might keep me my job. Things have to change. Past practices were not effective"

How agents feel about their job and DAPO

Agents were asked whether parole reform had changed the way they felt about their job.

Most agents (N=8, or 53%) said that their feelings toward their job had gotten worse. They mentioned having less time in the field, an increase in paperwork, feeling 'nit-picked' by their supervisors, low morale due to the budget and current political environment, an increase in stress due to more time pressure, having too many tasks to do, not enjoying the social worker component of their job, operating under conditions of fear of reprisals, and wanting to retire or pursue a different career. One agent mentioned having their own system of doing things before, and having to change that now.

Two agents said that they now felt better about their job. They mentioned more time in the field, more time to follow up on Parolees At Large (PAL) and improved practices generally.

Five of the fifteen agents (33%) said that they had not changed the way they felt about their job. Several of these reported coming from a probation environment where "they did this anyway". Some said they still loved their job and that nothing would change that.

Agents were also asked a separate question about whether parole reform had changed the way they felt about DAPO, in order to see how agents felt towards the organization as opposed to their role within it.

Findings were similar to the above question. Eight agents (53%) said their feelings towards DAPO had worsened, due to disappointment in the lack of involvement of field agents in the rollout of parole reform, general low morale and job stress, leader incompetence, and a view that (in the longer term) caseloads cannot be maintained at 48:1, which caused a feeling of deception and being "played with". A small number of these agents said that they now felt "locked into the unit" and unable to leave; they reported being denied opportunity for transfer/promotion due to the heavy investment in their training and a commitment to parole reform. These agents were extremely dissatisfied with their current situation.

Only one agent reported feeling more positive about DAPO, stating that DAPO was trying to improve things and make changes for the better.

The remaining six agents (40%) reported no change, even though several of them acknowledged the changing political environment and expressed uncertainty about their future.

Training and ongoing support

Whether training was sufficient

Agents were asked for their feedback about whether training had given them the skills and knowledge they need to operate under the new model.

Of the 15 agents, eight of them (53%) said that training was sufficient, and seven (47%) responded that it wasn't. A common theme among the responses was that training should be more hands on and involve more practice and application of the policy to field conditions, perhaps at the unit itself. Other comments included that trainers should have had more recent field experience, that agents already had the skills, that training was rushed and that problems were not solved before moving onto the next phase. Some agents felt that they needed a lot more revision within the unit to meet the standards of the QA criteria.

Positive comments about training were that ideas from management and the other pilot sites all came together to facilitate the process. The three phases were also seen as a good idea, allowing agents more time to walk through parole reform taking smaller steps.

TRAINING

"When we started we had no information on who came up with the initial interview, monthly goals etc – which other agencies were using it and why it was a good tool. We had no idea about how this stuff came about"

"I didn't walk away feeling like I'd learned anything. Not too much time was on training"

Next, agents were polled to see if they wanted to receive additional training in parole reform. Only five agents wanted more training, in order to wrap things up, provide a refresher, obtain hands on field training, better MI training, specific COMPAS case plan training, and additional training specific to electronic in home detention (EID) devices.

Suggested improvements to training

The following suggestions (in the agents' words) were made to improve training:

- Sitting at a table looking at slides all day is not realistic;
- Patience. Supervisors and managers need patience with people – people need more time to accept new procedures;
- We need workshops and more hands on training, to actually do an initial interview, home call, etc;
- We need to address the safety issue of how to spend 20 minutes at a house;
- Training needs to be phased – there will be people who won't accept it. Supervisors who are about to retire won't accept it;
- We need training in how to sketch a residence;
- Everything should be established and ironed out before hand;
- We need a lot of examples, and the use of templates. I'd like hands on training at the unit instead of a classroom;
- We need ride-alongs so we can be shown what to do based on our own behavior;
- There should be a meeting with District Administrators before the policy is introduced, so you educate the leadership first;
- It needs to start at the PA3 level or you won't have trickle down to the lower ranks;
- Sub-par agents won't be able to do this;
- Mimi Carter's training should be at the beginning. We need concrete evidence of what we are doing and why up-front, to make it easier to accept;
- Use the pilot site personnel as trainers.

ONGOING SUPPORT

"The lines of communication are open, instead of shoving it at us. They've been open to suggestion – whether they change things, time will tell"

"I'm not a website guy. I ask the supervisor or other agents"

Ongoing support

Agents were next asked what ongoing support was available to them regarding parole reform, to ascertain what resources they used to gather further information and resolve queries.

Most agents (N=8, or 53%) said that they sought guidance from their peers or supervisor within the unit. Only five agents said they used the CPSRM sharepoint online resource, although another couple of agents were aware of the site but said that they weren't website people. Three agents mentioned emailing HQ staff and receiving prompt replies to their questions.

Interestingly, one agent from a unit experiencing staff shortages interpreted this question in a different way and spoke about State programs available for assisting with staff stress.

CPSRM policy manual

Agents were asked to what extent they had read, or referred to, the CPSRM policy manual.

The majority of agents (N=12, or 80%) stated that they had never referred to the manual; many did not know it existed. Agents were quite cynical in their comments, referring to the manual by its nickname ("the manifesto") and implying that they were too busy to read it or didn't know where to find it. Comments about the document were that it was too lengthy, too fluid, was slow to be updated with changes to policy, that learning took place on the job, that training materials were used for reference, and that it was difficult to obtain a copy of the manual.

Of the three people who said that they did refer to the manual, one said that they had read all of it and refer to it weekly, one referred to it twice a week for clarification, and one said they had read it initially but had not referred to it since then.

Suggested improvements to the policy manual included making it easier to find relevant sections with tabs, making it shorter, including the matrix showing specifications for supervision categories, include a section on EIDs, updating it more regularly so that the information contained in the manual was current, and generally making it more user-friendly.

POLICY MANUAL

"Never picked it up"

"What policy manual?"

"I haven't read it. It's probably accessible through sharepoint. I haven't had time"

"I've read the whole thing. I refer to it on a weekly basis as situations come up"

CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

"We have done everything they've asked"

"We're doing everything we're supposed to. It's just that meeting specs is hard"

DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT

"The Case Conference review has no significant value. A lot of time the parolees don't go. They have no bearing anyway and are not necessary"

"Following up on goals sheets. Following up on TP resource collaterals, which are sometimes unnecessary if guys hit the ground running right off the bat"

Changes implemented with CPSRM

A series of questions was asked to document actual change in practice that had occurred at the pilot sites. These questions were intended to ensure that policy had been implemented, and that all pilot sites had adopted new procedures, changed their methods of supervision, and were operating according to the new policies. Some of these questions merely document that change had taken place; for brevity, responses to these questions have been combined.

Whether all CPSRM elements were implemented as planned

We asked agents whether there were any elements of CPSRM that were not fully implemented.

The majority of agents (N=12, or 80%) responded no – they were doing everything they had been asked to do. Only two agents thought that certain components had not been fully implemented – the nominated areas were category movement, and, more generally, the field testing of policies prior to their implementation. One agent did not provide a response to this question. In essence, most agents thought that all facets of the new policy had been implemented at the unit level – there was nothing that agents were only paying ‘lip service’ to and ignoring in practice.

What was more difficult to implement

Similarly, agents were asked whether there was any component of parole reform that was more difficult to implement on a day to day basis; that is, any area of parole reform that sounded reasonable in theory but was more difficult to carry out in practice.

As with previous questions, agents mostly mentioned goals sheets (N=4), and the CCR (N=2). Agents also occasionally mentioned case plans (because they were so time-consuming), residence verifications (due to safety issues), and that the practical application

was different from theory. Six agents commented that they could not think of an area that was particularly difficult to put into practice.

Parolee input into supervision

Asked whether the new policy had changed the input that parolees have into their supervision, most agents (N=10, or 67%) thought that it had not. Some of these agents acknowledged that there was potential for increased input from parolees, for example, via the CCR, but that, in practice, the input from parolees did not change anything and so was insignificant. It was often noted that parolees didn't show up for the CCR, or that their input did not change the outcome in a significant way. There was also a recognition that the goals sheet could potentially assist some parolees, particularly those on first-time release, that it may provide a visual aid and help parolees take initiative and responsibility, but that overall it wasn't a useful tool. One of these agents thought that there had been no change in parolee input because, in his view, he has always used their input and worked with them anyway.

The remaining five agents (33%) thought that parolees did have more input into supervision. Among these agents, there was recognition that some parolees noticed an increase in communication with their agent, and felt that their agent cared more about them. Again, agents commented that there was a difference between ‘first-time’ parolees and ‘old-time’ parolees in terms of the input that parolees would have, and the benefits that could be gained from this interaction.

Identification of criminogenic needs

Agents were asked whether parole reform had changed the way they identified or addressed a parolee's criminogenic needs. Since we did not interview agents prior to parole reform to get a baseline measure, this question asked agents to think about the way they used to do things compared to current practice.

Ten agents (67%) were of the opinion that parole reform had no impact on the way they dealt with the needs of parolees. Many of these agents commented that they were doing this before anyway via the needs assessment

PAROLEE INPUT

"So much emphasis has been on files and checking the boxes. No-one has asked the parolee. We need a business model like health where you ask people what they think of the service that has been provided"

"They are more communicative with us because we have more time. They've appreciated that. The more interaction you have with them the more they think you care. And you do"

CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS

"I still go off instincts, the parolee's criminal history and his demeanor"

"That's experience"

"It makes me more aware of their criminal history and background. I consider family, environment etc and have a better understanding of why/how/when they'll reoffend"

STYLE OF COMMUNICATION

"You know your guys and what they're about"

"I'm much more positive with them now. For a long time it was assembly-line work. Now I'm more creative in dealing with them in an individual way rather than working with them in a general manner"

form (1659) but just didn't have names for it, and that they relied on their experience (rather than policy) to make judgments about parolee supervision.

Five agents said that the new policy had changed this aspect of their work. The COMPAS case plan helped them identify triggers and appropriate resources for the parolee, and assisted them identify special conditions of supervision where appropriate (for example, no alcohol). There was a recognition that the case plan broke down needs better than before, and that it ensured that risk factors were not overlooked – that agents were now catching everything.

Agent style of communication

We were interested in whether agents thought that the new policy had changed the way they spoke with parolees.

The majority of agents (N=13, or 87%) thought that there was no change, mostly because "I was doing this before anyway." Most agents reported that they had their own style of speaking with parolees that treated them with respect and decency but that "matched" the deference of the parolee, so they adjusted their style in accordance with the way that the parolee treated them. Most agents, therefore, did not think that they had changed their communication with parolees since parole reform. Later in this report we discuss findings from supervisors' responses to this question.

Only three agents reported that they had changed the way they spoke with parolees. One of these agents, who was generally positive about parole reform, stated that he was now more positive with parolees, was more creative in his supervision, and tailored supervision more to the individual now. The other agent felt negative about his change in communication with parolees, and mentioned feeling like a used-car salesman, trying to sell a product to the parolee that he did not believe in.

Use of Motivational Interviewing (MI)

We asked agents whether they thought that MI was an appropriate or useful tool for agents, and the extent to which they used MI in their contacts with parolees.

Most agents (N=12, or 80%) thought that it was a useful tool. In addition, the majority of agents (N=13, or 87%) said they used MI on a daily basis with parolees.

Only two agents thought that it was not useful or appropriate (and one agent declined to answer this question). These agents were generally opposed to parole reform and thought that the use of MI was not a realistic approach to supervision.

Use of rewards and incentives

Agents were asked for feedback on whether the pilot had changed the way they rewarded or provided incentives to parolees.

Only a few agents said that the new program actually improved their use of rewards/incentives. One agent said that he had been able to provide cash stipends for books, and offered the incentive of setting goals to have an EID removed. Most agents reported that it was "business as usual" and that tangible rewards had not been provided. Additional comments were that it was difficult to document use of rewards in the ROS (whether four positive comments made during a contact counted as four rewards or only one), and that the use of positive reinforcement was seen inside the organization as being weak.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

"Everyone should know MI. We're not all well versed in MI, however, even though they think we are"

"Some parolees pick up on what we're saying and it has a benefit"

"I like the idea of speaking to them and having them make the decision for themselves. It's a role reversal – make it their idea"

REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

"There are no tangible rewards that I can offer. A bus pass? Terrible"

"I have nothing to give them"

"Before, parolees would just ask for stuff. Now, I say accomplish this goal and we'll trade, I'll give you something for it"

PROGRAMMING

"I don't have any"

"Local programs – job placement programs – have been wiped out. No jobs means idle time"

Programming

Although parole reform did not introduce any changes to programming, we asked agents several questions regarding programming. It is possible that the increased focus on the risk factors of parolees had an indirect effect on programming by identifying available programs via the case plan and more successfully matching parolees to programs that would benefit them.

The first question asked agents whether there was any change to the availability or allocation of programming as a result of parole reform. Most agents (N=10, or 67%) thought not. Three agents thought that programming had been reduced in recent months, but as a result of budget cuts as opposed to parole reform. One

agent thought that programming had actually increased, with extra housing available and extra beds at the day reporting center now available.

The next question sought feedback from agents as to whether they thought the availability of programming was sufficient. The majority of agents (N=11, or 73%) thought that not enough programming was available. Agents reported that they needed more employment programs, mental health places, programs for parolees who return a dirty drug test (e.g., a detox program prior to a residential drug treatment facility), and that more resources were needed closer to the unit so that parolees didn't have to travel so far. It was the view of one agent that programming needed to be increased four-fold.

Only three agents thought there were enough programs, and all three of these commented that they had seen worse in other units, so their unit was relatively well off regarding programs.

One agent talked about the distinction between programming as a service (e.g., job placement) and programming as a sanction, and said that this distinction had not been covered during the pilot.

Other changes to practice confirmed

A series of questions was asked to ascertain how CPSRM had changed practices concerning pre-release planning, use of case plans, case conferencing, and the discharge consideration process. The purpose of these questions was to confirm that proposed policy changes had actually taken place at all pilot sites. We have combined agent responses to these questions and list them below.

Pre-release planning:

- It's more involved now, but I prefer the previous system;
- It's very time-consuming and takes a "monstrous" effort;
- If not using COMPAS daily it takes a lot of effort just to remember passwords and how to use the system;
- There's a lot more paperwork involved;
- It helps you know your offender, but we're doing the work of an institutional counselor;
- Some programs identified in COMPAS may not be available, so it creates work fixing the case plan;
- There's too much emphasis on criminogenic needs and not enough on a person's criminal history and rap sheet;
- The residence verification process is horrible – we used to just take parolees home and now we can't;
- I like it. I like COMPAS. COMPAS really identifies what I want the parolee to do and gives me information that I didn't have before.

Case plan:

- I don't have time to pull out the case plan when doing home visits;
- There has been no change for me;
- I don't use case plans;
- It's just a documentation tool – we identified criminogenic needs in the past anyway;
- I don't use a case plan. I already know where to send these people in the community - which programs work. We know our local resources;
- All the stuff I used to do verbally – getting them registered, finding them programs – is now in a concrete form. I could write it in ROS before, but it's now in a case plan so the parolee can sign off on what I've done for them;
- COMPAS does nothing to prepare me better to supervise this guy. I know resources anyway.

Case conferencing:

- We've always done case conferencing, so there's been no change for us. We do have more now though;
- We didn't do TP before – there's more paperwork but not really a big change though;
- We didn't do it before;

- I think it's positive. If they can't make it to the CCR, you speak on their behalf;
- If we want to take a person into custody or give a sanction, it gives a better picture of what the parolee is doing/not doing, and a better understanding of each parolee.

Discharge consideration:

- The documentation is more involved now, more detailed. You have to articulate how the parolee has performed – it provides a bigger and more complete picture to the BPH;
- There's a difference between “do this and get off parole” and “do this and I will recommend you get off parole”. But serious/violent offenders get retained anyway, so why bother? There's a discrepancy between DAPO and BPH – we recommend discharge and BPH retains on parole;
- It's a matter of economics – we are discharging more people early now instead of keeping them on parole.

Summary questions

Perceived benefits of parole reform

Agents were asked to think of the main benefits (if any) of parole reform. The following benefits (in no particular order) were mentioned:

- Reduction in caseloads;
- Improved quality of contacts;
- Working closer to parolees;
- Using positive reinforcement with people who haven't had it in their life;
- Residence verification;
- Consistency through standardization of forms;
- Improved initial/comprehensive interviews;
- Better resources for parolees through COMPAS;
- Holding agents accountable through documentation;
- Everyone being on the same page due to use of CSRA scores;
- Fewer loose ends;
- Parolees don't come into the office, so fewer interruptions;
- A lot more information on a parolee if he is transferred from other agent.

Only one agent said that they could see no benefits to parole reform.

Perceived drawbacks

When asked about the perceived drawbacks of parole reform, many agents (N=9, or 60%) talked about the increase in paperwork. Some agents also mentioned the reduction in field work and more time spent in the office. Other comments included being micro-managed by supervisors, too much emphasis on staff compliance with specifications and forms, the lack of programming, redundancy in forms, a feeling of being overwhelmed, having not enough time, stress of having to achieve work within strict time deadlines, needing laptops in cars to reduce repetition in paperwork, the need for updated computer systems, and having no cushion for staff time off. One agent suggested removing the word 'reform' from the new policy to make it more acceptable to seasoned agents.

DRAWBACKS

“The increase in paperwork a lot of people are complaining about. Redundancy needs to be looked at”

“It's overwhelming”

“If I take time off – furlough days, sick days, vacation – it's no fun coming back”

Impact on public safety

Agents were asked whether they thought parole reform would have an impact on public safety. This open-ended question was worded carefully; agents could say that there would be no impact (public safety would stay the same), a positive impact (improved public safety) or a negative impact (reduced public safety).

Most agents (N=9, or 60%) thought that the new policies would enhance public safety. These agents acknowledged that they had a better idea of the community resources available to them, a better understanding of parolees and their families, that there was the potential to spend more time in the community (as long as paperwork was reduced, or caseloads dropped to 40:1), that they generally spent more time with parolees now, that they had more intelligence if a parolee went on PAL status, that the new residence verification procedures increased the chances of detecting something that shouldn't be there, and that parole reform would help some parolees achieve rehabilitation sooner than they ordinarily would. Some of these agents

PUBLIC SAFETY

"If it does rollout more agents with reduced caseloads will have more time in the community, if they cut some paperwork"

"It could, in certain cases. It's not going to fix everybody but these guys do need to be watched as carefully as we can"

"The purpose is to get out into the field but I don't have more time now, due to increased paperwork. I can't search and see what these guys are up to – it's just a paper trail"

acknowledged that the new supervision practices would be more successful with certain parolees than others, but that even helping just one parolee would improve public safety and hence be worthwhile.

Two of the fifteen agents thought that parole reform had a detrimental impact on public safety, due to less time in the community now. One of these agents said that the paperwork was so overwhelming that it gave him less time to communicate with parolees and their families, and as a result cases were 'blowing up' more frequently now, and he was constantly behind in his work.

Three agents thought that there would be no change to public safety. One of these commented that parolees cannot be changed; one thought that the increased paperwork and subsequent reduction in field work would reduce public safety.

Parolee's point of view

We asked agents whether, from the parolee's point of view, parole reform had been positive, negative or neutral.

Seven agents (47%) thought neutral. These agents made the following comments: that parolees did not have enough involvement for there to be a positive effect, that although there was now more accountability on parolees, that they could not be changed, that they had not seen any positive response from parolees, that parolees did not have a high

participation rate in the CCR or discharge reviews, that it depends on whether the parolee was a 'first-timer' or 'old-timer', and that a lot of parolees didn't want to be seen.

Five agents (33%) thought that the pilot program was viewed positively by parolees. They mentioned that the goals sheet was concrete and served as a motivator to parolees, that parolees now had more resources available to them and thus more opportunity to stay out of prison, that agents were now more positive in their outlook and this reflected on parolees, that agents now spent more time with parolees and were thought to care more about their clients now, and that parolees were surprised at how much time agents spent with them. Another perceived benefit for parolees noted by two agents was that they don't have to report to the office any more – agents now travel to them.

The remaining three agents (20%) thought that parolees viewed parole reform negatively, due to agents "being on them more", and 'old-timer' parolees not really benefiting.

PAROLEE'S VIEWPOINT

"I just don't feel like there's enough involvement with the parolee to make a difference in his supervision"

"Parolees actually have something concrete that they can refer to – this is what I need to do. It serves as a motivator, that what they do affects their discharge"

Barriers and roadblocks to implementation

Our final interview question probed for perceived barriers or roadblocks to implementing parole reform State-wide. We had previously asked agents about how training could be improved (so those comments, mentioned elsewhere in the report, are also relevant here) but this question is really looking for 'showstoppers' – things that will need to be overcome if parole reform is to be successfully rolled out.

Obviously, the budget/financial considerations was the most frequent obstacle mentioned (by 7 agents), particularly relating to the increase in agent numbers that would be required to maintain caseloads at 48:1. Some agents recognized that currently many cases were 'shuffled' to other units in order to artificially keep caseloads at 48:1, and that, if introduced widely, there would be nowhere to transfer cases to. Agents also brought up the current political climate and the uncertainty facing parole as an organization. Many agents were aware that staff acceptance and 'agent mentality' at the grass roots level was something that would need to be addressed and overcome. Better technology was mentioned – laptops in cars and one unifying data system would reduce repetition of data entry and reliance on hand-written notes. They also mentioned that paperwork should be reduced in order to gain staff acceptance, and expectations that are currently fluid and open to different interpretations should be nailed down. One agent suggested a different structure to Parole and Community Team (PACT) to provide one-on-one instead of a classroom setting.

A few agents talked about the public image of parole – specifically, the lack of a public image. Some agents recognized that they performed a dangerous role protecting public safety, but that, unlike other law enforcement agencies, they did so without marked cars, uniforms, radios, dispatch, and backup. Some agents mentioned that parole often did not receive the public recognition it deserved; for example, when arresting a parolee often the police "took over" and received credit in the media.

ROADBLOCKS

"Money. Time. We don't have either one"

"The budget. It's too expensive and takes too many staff to implement"

"Some agents have the old prison guard mentality – they don't like to wear different hats. There's a law enforcement/cop mentality. Accepting the new way of doing things is going to be hard for agents, PA1 though to PA3s"

"A roadblock is changing the mindset of agents who are so used to hooking and booking rather than providing services"

"It has to go forward. It's a must, not optional. To make this state progress we definitely need parole reform"

"It's the public image of parole that's never been addressed. We have no public image and it's sad. People don't know what I do. People associate parole with the institutions or probation and I'm neither"

"I want the program to work because it justifies my position"

- Our unit may be unique – our agents and supervisors want to be on board. Low morale generally may lead to poor acceptance;
- They should make it clear what the audit will be looking for so we don't get dinged.

Conclusions from PA1 interviews

It was clear from the interviews that agents fell into two 'camps' – those holding positive opinions toward parole reform and those with negative views. Within these two groups, some agents held stronger or more extreme views than others, but there didn't seem to be any agents 'in the middle'.

In order to get an estimate of the distribution of agents within these two groupings, we classified each interviewee according to whether they were positive overall (e.g., they named several benefits, commented on enhanced quality of work, felt their job was not harder etc) or negative overall (e.g., they could see few benefits, they mentioned their job was now harder, they disliked their job etc). Agents were split approximately 50-50: eight agents were classified as negative, and seven as positive. No one unit was unanimously positive or negative, although some tended to be more slightly positive than others.

Having said that, many agents expressed optimism about parole reform, and said they wanted it to work.

Further comments

Time was included at the end of the interview for agents to provide feedback about areas not covered in the structured questions.

These comments are listed below, grouped broadly into comments that were positive, or that provided constructive negative feedback.

Positive comments:

- I'm getting more information – before we were sloppy because we were overwhelmed;
- If you want quality work we need more time and less people. But if you want to fix a parolee you need more programs;
- In theory it's great. We all want it to work;
- I like the ROS – it gives me room to write.

Constructive critical comments:

- We are living under the threat of being written up for noncompliance. It's difficult, because an agent is always out. There has been too much emphasis on specifications, and not enough latitude when dealing with certain situations;
- The first half of the month is all paperwork. I can't get into the field. I haven't seen my people yet;
- Doing the residence verification could have a negative impact on agent safety;
- Our unit now generates a lot of paperwork (toner, paper etc) and used clerical support more than it used to;
- I don't want to do COMPAS or goals. My job should be supervision and public safety;
- Strict supervisors will lead to stress. We need supervisors with patience, who will go with the flow and ease their people into parole reform;
- My mileage has gone up due to an increase in unannounced home visits;
- We need to have a social worker at each office, and we need a radio, dispatch, and a better approach to agent safety;
- There has been too much shuffling of cases – you do a comprehensive on a guy then find he has been transferred to someone else's caseload;
- Parole reform will be hard to implement at other units with discrepancies and not such good numbers (i.e., higher RTC rates);
- There was minimal union representation with parole reform – we needed representation at all phases of the pilot;
- The wheel wasn't broken and didn't need fixing – we were just overworked and needed fewer cases. I prefer the old system;
- We need to recognize the importance of programs – employment programs will get a parolee's self worth back. They've got nothing to do. This is more important than the new policies;

It is likely that the division of agents noticed in the sample interviewed was fairly representative of pilot agents as a whole, due to the randomness of sample selection. If we had interviewed agents selected by supervisors then the proportions of positive/negative agents may have been skewed in either direction, depending on whether supervisors wished to promote a more or less positive outlook. Consequently, the authors are confident that the views presented in this report are a fair representation of pilot site views overall, even though not everyone was interviewed.

Does this roughly 50-50 split at pilot sites predict acceptance of the new model in the general pool of agents were parole reform to rollout across the State? Prior to the pilot it was expected that a small proportion of agents, for a variety of reasons, may not embrace parole reform. A certain level of staff attrition – at the supervisory level as well as PA1 – was therefore to be expected. However, if staff resistance to parole reform was to be 50%, then this would be a major obstacle that would have to be overcome.

On the one hand, we could argue that pilot site staff were likely to be more positive about parole reform than the overall agent population. Pilot sites were carefully selected on the basis of having supportive leadership who were involved in the development of parole reform and who were thus ‘on side’. Pilot site agents were provided with extensive training (the format of which is unlikely to be replicated during a wider rollout), with the DAPO Director present to show top-level support. After each phase of training the parole reform team visited each pilot site to speak with agents and answer any questions. There was also a suggestion from some agents, which we have not confirmed and so must be treated with caution, that certain pilot sites were involved in the pilot because they had a better chance of successfully implementing the pilot than, say, units in other areas (e.g., city areas with high transient/homeless populations and high RTC rates).

On the other hand, it might be argued that agents at pilot sites are likely to be *less* positive about the new policies than their peers if a rollout now took place, for the following reasons. As a result of feedback provided by agents, forms have been changed to reduce redundancy and make them more user-friendly. Certain policies have been adjusted also (for example, monthly goals changed to quarterly). The ‘fluidity’ of the pilot and ‘tweaking’ of policies caused many agents to feel that policies were not well tested prior to implementation and resulted in frustration. Ironically, although agents understood the nature of the pilot and their role as ‘guinea pigs’ to iron out policies, many of them complained that there were too many changes made along the way, even though these changes were as a direct result of their feedback. The QA processes of the pilot also had a negative impact on the outlook of many agents. Supervisors were under extreme pressure to ‘meet specs’ and pass the scrutiny of the QA audits; this pressure, at times, was then directed towards agents. Agents from several units complained of feeling ‘nitpicked’ and micromanaged by supervisors who were focused on achieving the high QA standard, often at the expense of treating their agents with patience, understanding, and the use of positive reinforcement. This feeling of being under the microscope and constantly under threat probably had a negative impact on some staff during the pilot. Presumably, some of this pressure would dissipate during a broader rollout; if everyone was to adopt the new policies there would be less attention focused on just four units, as was the case with the pilot. Finally, we were unable to determine the extent to which recent political developments in the State caused morale to drop at the time that interviews were conducted; perhaps some of the negativity reported here was a direct result of the political environment rather than reform per se. Since we did not conduct baseline interviews to gather feedback prior to the pilot, and because we did not interview a control sample of agents from other, non-pilot units, we were also unable to determine whether these agents were negative before parole reform, or whether they were more or less negative than their peers at other units.

Consequently, the interviews conducted for this process evaluation are not very helpful in predicting the number of agents who might oppose parole reform during a rollout.

We do not wish to make recommendations for future action based on the interview findings. However, we provide the following summary of PA1 feedback that may assist a future rollout:

1. A rollout would be helped by having forms and procedures firmly in place beforehand to minimize changes once the rollout commenced. This would require the policy manual to be finalized and made readily available, forms to be in their final versions, with perhaps additional templates and examples circulated. Areas of inconsistency of interpretation should be explored and clarified, and “what if” scenarios developed to circulate the correct approach.
2. Staff concerns regarding the amount of paperwork should be addressed, with further reductions to duplication made where possible and consideration given to the removal altogether or reduction in use of some documentation requirements.
3. Consideration should be given to the supervision categories to ensure that all possible circumstances that may arise regarding the allocation of cases (TP, A – D) to caseloads are considered, to ensure a fair and balanced workload for all staff.
4. Consideration should be given to providing some sort of relief or cushion in extenuating circumstances within the unit; if agents are operating at capacity, then there is no slack in the system to absorb additional work.

5. Consideration should be given to incorporating more hands-on training at the unit and in the field, and providing agents with more information regarding EBP initially. Consideration should also be given to utilizing pilot site staff during training, in order to benefit from their experience and assist ‘buy in’ from other agents.
6. It has been suggested that training should start at the top level with supervisory staff, because without their full support it will be difficult to gain the acceptance of agents.
7. It is likely that agents will be more accepting of the new policies if they are given a little ‘wiggle room’ regarding meeting specifications in extenuating circumstances (e.g., when agents are absent).
8. Leadership should consider how to deal with potential staff attrition. Perhaps reform could be phased in gradually (‘grandfathered in’) to give, for example, supervisors who were about to retire and who did not buy into the new program an opportunity to transfer to somewhere else in the organization. The cost to the organization of replacing staff at both the agent and supervisory level would need to be considered.
9. Ideally, DAPO should implement new technologies to help deal with redundancy in paperwork and reduce the reliance on hand-written notes.
10. The issue raised about agent safety at the residence during the pre-parole residence verification should be addressed, in addition to considering additional training in sketching the residence and dealing with home occupants unfamiliar with parole (caused by the parolee not living at the residence).
11. Ideally, more programs should be provided to enable agents more opportunity to assist parolees according to the risk factors they have identified.
12. DAPO should seek further input from agents regarding ‘work-arounds’ that are being developed, for example, calling a residence to ensure a parolee is home prior to an ‘unannounced’ home visit.
13. Consideration should be given to the unanticipated costs of implementing parole reform, such as increased mileage and vehicle maintenance and increased office supplies and use of support staff.

5. FINDINGS FROM PA2/PA3 INTERVIEWS

In a couple of instances, not all eight supervisory staff answered each question, due to (a) one question being added after interviews with PA3s took place but prior to PA2 interviews, and as a consequence only PA2 staff answered this question, and (b) at times the telephone interviews with PA3 staff deviated from the structured format and involved discussion of other issues, making it difficult to ask every question due to time constraints.

Workload

Impact on overall workload and tasks performed

Supervisors were asked whether parole reform had changed their workload, in terms of how busy they were or the time spent on different tasks. It should be noted that a policy change to the PA2 role occurred coincident with parole reform, which reduced PA2 caseloads and increased their supervisory function, and that this may be reflected in some answers.

Six out of the eight supervisors reported that there had been a change. As with agents, supervisors commented on having fewer cases but more paperwork. Generally, most supervisors thought that, even though their workload had changed significantly, the number of hours they worked each week remained the same. A couple of supervisors at the PA2 level reported more time available now to train staff, probably due to the shift in role mentioned previously. One supervisor felt that he had less work overall now, due to fewer cases. At the other extreme, one supervisor reported doing more work now and feeling burnt out. A different supervisor said that he had struggled to get used to the change in procedures and new expectations inherent in parole reform.

Of the two supervisors who said that their workload had not changed, one reported that it was too soon to gauge the impact of the new policy on his workload, and that he was still dealing with the issue of the level of proficiency of his agents, and the other thought that his workload balanced out, reflecting no significant change overall.

WORKLOAD

“We went away from office-type supervision. You can work one-on-one with problematic cases. In the past it was just putting out fires. It’s more effective now”

“Time-wise it’s about the same – fewer cases but more paperwork. It’s more stressful now, being monitored by HQ going through files. We can only control so much but ultimately we’re the ones responsible”

“It’s more paper intensive due to the front-loading of services, but it kind of balances out. Now we’re being proactive rather than reactive. Either you do the work at the front end or the back end – you pay for it by revoking them”

Management of caseload sizes

Next, supervisors were asked whether it was easy or difficult to maintain caseload sizes at 48:1 at their unit.

Most (five) thought that it was easy. These supervisors mentioned that they monitored caseloads every day, but for the most part did not need to transfer too many cases, or were able to transfer them within their unit, or to a co-located unit in their complex. Some supervisors mentioned the difficulty of maintaining caseloads at 48 if reform was to rollout state-wide, due to the inability of being able to transfer cases to other units if those units were also constrained.

The remaining three supervisors reported that it was difficult to manage caseloads. They reported spending a lot of time monitoring caseload size, and said that they felt under the microscope every day from HQ to be at exactly 48. These supervisors said that the constant (daily or weekly) transferring of cases was not a good system, and led to lack of consistency for both parolees and agents; some leeway was required to make it possible for agents to be slightly under or over 48. Stand-alone units found it more difficult than co-located units, because they had had fewer options for transferring cases seamlessly.

MAXIMUM CASELOADS

"Some agents could handle 20 more cases. Some need fewer. Overall, we're at the max. There's a lot to do with 48 cases"

"48. I don't think they are overloaded with cases, but we do struggle if they take leave time - other agents have to pick up the slack. The workload has got better over time"

Maximum caseload size

Supervisors were asked to nominate the maximum number of cases their agents could manage comfortably at the moment.

Forty-eight was the most common response, nominated by five supervisors. These supervisors commented that (a) this was a good number to provide some flexibility when agents took leave, (b) this number was manageable with the additional paperwork introduced with parole reform, and (c) a range was required to allow numbers to go a little above or below 48 to ease balancing of caseloads. One supervisor commented that the PA1 position was like a new job post-reform, involving the parolee more, identifying criminogenic needs, and giving parolees appropriate 'dosage' to address those needs. Some supervisors also noted that not all agents were transitioning to parole reform equally well, so while caseloads could be increased for some (high-performing) agents, other agents struggled to achieve the minimum standards of the new model, and for this reason caseloads could not go over 48. When anomalies in staffing occurred (e.g., reasonable accommodations being made for an agent) then it was felt that 48 was the maximum caseload size due to an unbalanced mix of supervision categories being carried by agents.

Two of the eight supervisors thought that caseloads could increase; both thought that 55 was a reasonable maximum. One of these supervisors hedged his response by saying that agents needed an even distribution of categories, with not too many Category A/B, but that having Category D parolees on a caseload gave agents a bit of slack. The one remaining supervisor said that it was too soon to gauge. This supervisor said that, with the constant changes to the pilot and tweaking of forms, his agents had not been operating at a consistent level so it was too soon to tell if there were proficiency issues at 48:1.

Consequently, the *distribution* of categories on an agent's caseload seems to be just as important as the *number* of cases. All things being equal, it seems that 48 is attainable. However, decision-makers need to consider the impact of caseload size under anomalous conditions that produce an 'uneven playing field' for some agents.

Potential areas for reducing workload

Supervisors were asked for their opinion on potential areas for cutting workload should caseloads increase.

Similar areas for workload reduction were mentioned by supervisors as agents. The CCR was mentioned, especially for parolees who had a job and were doing well, and because only 10% of parolees were thought to attend. Supervisors talked about the amount of time they spent notifying the parolee, scheduling the reviews, and then setting aside a day twice a month to conduct CCRs. The goals report was also nominated, because supervisors thought (a) this could be done through the ROS, (b) good agents did something akin to setting goals for parolees anyway, and (c) goals should not be mandatory for all parolees, since for the average parolee it was not thought to provide anything beneficial. The residence verification was also identified, because 80% of the time the parolee did not return to that address. One

REDUCING WORKLOAD

"It would be very difficult if caseloads were to go up - above 48 would not be manageable. But due to front-loading of services, I cannot identify any areas to be removed. It's very paper-intensive, but it's for a reason"

"The goals are good - everything is purpose driven. I can't see anything to cut - you need CCR, assessment, initial/comprehensive interview to better identify parolees' needs, and for conformity across the state"

TRAINING

"A lot of what Mimi said made some things click. The parole reform group and trainers were involved in the development of reform, and used terminology that was common knowledge for them (like criminogenic needs) but we didn't get it. We didn't get the foundation"

"We struggled with the first 2 phases – we were told that it was scientific and based on research but we weren't given that. Need that up front, then the practical information"

"Agents need to understand the 'why' for the training"

that agents did need additional training, especially to deal with the changing forms and some of the more complex components, like the categories listed in the CCR form. The other supervisor thought that one morning and one afternoon was not enough time, that more training was required at the unit level, and that information about EBP (provided by Mimi Carter from CEPP) was needed up-front.

Suggested improvements to training

The following suggestions were made to improve future training:

- Have Mimi's presentation [on evidence-based practices] at the beginning;
- The use of tutorials and hands-on examples;
- Taking minutes of what was discussed during training to be able to refer to later;
- More time spent on training;
- Use pilot site staff as trainers, including supervisors;
- With the large group as a whole include role-playing and interaction, then have more follow-up training at the units, because people were afraid to speak up at training;
- Resolve outstanding issues to make policies more finite;
- Keep it phased. Some agents will be reluctant to change – it may take a while and they may find it overwhelming at first.

Ongoing support

Supervisors were unanimous in their praise for the ongoing support they had received during the pilot. Many mentioned receiving replies to email questions within hours. They mentioned share-point, and regular visits by the parole reform team to the units. Supervisors commended HQ for being accessible, listening to concerns, and acting to improve things based on suggestions from the field. One supervisor named every person on the HQ parole reform team and said that they were all accessible via email or phone. One suggestion was to have regional parole reform teams, trained by HQ staff, to operate at the regional level during a rollout. Several supervisors were pleasantly surprised by the level of access they had to HQ, and observed that they had not seen this before within the department.

supervisor stated that, if caseloads were to go way up, then unannounced home visits as a standard would be difficult and should be reserved for parolees who were not doing the right thing and who needed closer monitoring. The final area mentioned was the requirement to change the case plan every time a remedial sanction took place (e.g., for a dirty test), adjusting start and end dates etc.

Three supervisors felt that no area of reform could be cut (see quotes). They stated that removing one area would impact other areas, and that things were done for a reason. One of these supervisors said that, instead of cutting certain elements, there may be a way of introducing a better system of monitoring procedures to make life easier for supervisors.

Training and ongoing support

Whether training was sufficient

Supervisors were asked whether training was sufficient, and whether their agents required any additional training in parole reform.

Six supervisors thought that training did give their agents the necessary skills and experience, but several of these hedged their replies by saying that they found training rushed, that more hands-on training was required, and that agents needed more training in how to prepare case plans (one-on-one sessions with PPP staff). One supervisor noted that, since it was a pilot program, things were not known ahead of time, which made it difficult sometimes to put policy into practice.

The other two supervisors thought that agent training was insufficient. One stated that, even though a certain level of change was expected since this was a pilot, he still found training to be 'wishy-washy;' training was not ready even for a pilot program. He thought

ONGOING SUPPORT

"There's plenty of support. I'm asking questions all the time of the parole reform team"

"SAC have made themselves very available by phone or email. They have reached out to everyone. It's been very good"

POLICY MANUAL

"It's on my computer - I use it daily. It needs to be updated with all the changes that have been made. But it is very detailed and descriptive, and I like that"

"I use it frequently. In the beginning I read it, now I refer to different sections. We're told it's not permanent and it's changing, so it's hard to learn because it will change"

CPSRM policy manual

We asked supervisors the extent to which they had read, and referred to, the policy manual.

Only two supervisors did not use the policy manual, preferring to refer to training materials due to policies being frequently updated. The remaining supervisors had referred to it, either at the commencement of the pilot, regularly, or when required. One supervisor said that he had made a copy for each agent. Several commented that it was difficult to rely on the manual since things changed frequently and they often needed to ask for clarification.

It appeared, therefore, that supervisors found the policy manual a lot more useful as a resource than did agents.

Changes implemented with CPSRM

Whether all CPSRM elements were implemented as planned

Supervisors were asked to think of any components of parole reform that had not been implemented as planned.

Supervisory staff thought that the pilot program had put into practice all facets of reform outlined in the PRTF report and training sessions. It was noted that the QA process was good in this respect, because it highlighted areas of concern early in the process so they could be rectified. Only one supervisor had anything further to say; in his opinion, a system for tracking compliance with specifications (supervisors can get information on this at the end of the month but it's too late by then) and monitoring changing CSRA scores should also have been implemented as part of the pilot.

What was more difficult to implement

We also asked supervisors whether any elements of the reform package were more difficult to implement on a day to day basis – that is, they sounded good in theory but were difficult to carry out in the field.

Most supervisors did not single out anything that hadn't really worked in practice. The goals report was mentioned by three supervisors; one said that it took time to complete, one said it was difficult to get parolee buy in, and the other was positive about the adjustment from monthly to quarterly use. A supervisor mentioned the difficulty inherent in tracking the rewarding of a parolee by an agent (see quote). As mentioned previously, a supervisor brought up the issue of scheduling the CCR (since there was no system to notify supervisors when they were due).

Whether additional resources are required

Supervisors were asked what, in an ideal world, they would need to make parole reform better. Half the supervisors named the need for more services, programs, and treatment for offenders, including employment programs, places for mentally ill clients, tattoo removal, and the overall ability for agents to be able to try different things with parolees. In addition, supervisors also saw the need for updated computer systems, an extra agent to provide relief within the unit, and the need to identify agents who came out of the academy but were "not cut out for the job" (e.g., through the FTO program).

Agent style of communication

When we asked agents whether they thought parole reform had changed the way they spoke with parolees, most reported that it had not; agents felt like they had a particular way of interacting with parolees based on their experience and that the new approach had not changed their individual style.

When we asked supervisors this question, however, only one thought there had been no change. This supervisor stated that the leadership of that particular unit had always encouraged agents to wear both the social worker and law enforcement hats, and to support treatment and resources for parolees. The other six supervisors (one was not asked this question) thought agents had changed their style of communication.

DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT

"Rewards and incentives. We've been doing MI for a long time, but documenting when you give someone a compliment? Good luck with that one"

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"We need jobs programs - offenders need jobs - they can't find jobs now. They need life skills. They get discouraged and use drugs"

"We always need services. The lack of services is a problem and could have an impact on recidivism"

They commented that:

- Agents spent more time with parolees one-on-one now, and asked questions that were not asked in the past;
- The length of individual contacts had increased;
- The quality of contacts had increased;
- The front-loading of services (through the comprehensive interview and goals report) paid huge dividends down the road;
- Parolees knew their agents better, and had a clearer idea of their expectations;
- The time spent up-front with parolees established rapport, resulting in the parolee respecting the agent more and being more concerned about meeting expectations;
- Agents now saw they needed to take on a more proactive, hands-on involvement with the parolee;
- Parole reform had given agents more awareness of their role in the reintegration of parolees into the community, for example, by not just giving referrals but interacting with providers as well;
- Head strong agents were better now – they had seen the ‘lock them up’ approach was not working;
- Parole reform had led to slightly “kinder and gentler” supervision;
- The things a parolee can recognize and change had improved a little bit;
- Agents were understanding the needs of parolees and were better able to address issues;
- Reform had increased the humanistic aspect of supervision, by engaging the parolee more and getting them to divulge information about themselves;
- Generally agents talked to parolees more now, and interacted with them more.

Summary

Perceived benefits of parole reform

Only one supervisor reported not really seeing any benefit of parole reform, because he hadn’t seen an impact on parolee criminal behavior. He commented that, due to DAPO hiring policies, the agent workforce was less varied than it used to be, now comprised of 95% of staff hired from an institutional background within CDCR. He thought that “if agents did not have a social worker aspect then parole reform did not go down well”.

All other supervisors named multiple benefits, as follows:

- A move from a reactive to a proactive agency, a better understanding of behavioral triggers, and a greater use of referral to programs before negative things happened in the lives of parolees;
- More information is drawn from the parolee – the parolee is opening up more;
- Better front-loading of services and more casework prior to release from the institution;
- The monthly (instead of quarterly) reporting system is easier;
- The PA2 specialist position is more of a resource for agents, especially when agents are out on leave;
- Improved standardization of forms, resulting in fewer “boot-leg” forms at different units ;
- Increased agent collaboration and involvement with both facilitators in the community and families has increased agent awareness and helped agents keep parolees on track;
- It’s a better way of tracking the progress of parolees;
- Reform has enhanced the casework aspect of the agent role;
- Agents now deal with the needs of the parolee;
- Reduced caseloads gives the agent more time to learn about the parolee, and the offender more time to take a look at themselves;
- COMPAS provides a continuum of prison services to the community, which gives the parolee continuity of care.

Perceived drawbacks

Asked about potential drawbacks of parole reform, supervisors brought up a lot of the same concerns as agents:

- The budget;
- The number of staff required to implement parole reform;

BENEFITS

“You have the time to actually spend with your parolees, especially at the front end. You have the time to talk about goals, objectives, and give them your expectations for supervision”

“The ability to do quality parole work and do our job the way it should be done has increased public safety, and is helping the parolee change his life and stay out of prison”

“Recidivism will go down. Parolees now have more services. Agents spend more time with them. As treatment and resources increase they are less likely to get into trouble. Before we didn’t have time to do that and they used to slip through the cracks”

DRAWBACKS

“You can’t do this program with 70 guys because paperwork has increased”

PUBLIC SAFETY

“Reduced caseloads gives more time for agents to investigate and pay attention to warning signs, which will enhance public safety”

“The more time we spend with parolees when they get out, the better the rapport, and the more time to deal with the nuisance ones to get them back on track – either to a program or RTC or whatever they need. PALS – we have time to go and get them and get them back on track. We also work closer with outside law enforcement”

- The office space, vehicles and other resources needed;
- Agent resistance to the social worker aspect of the role;
- Potential lack of training time to achieve agent buy in;
- Lack of time for agents to do everything due to increased paperwork;
- The mandatory goals report not being useful.

Impact on public safety

The question concerning the impact of parole reform on public safety was added after the PA3 interviews took place; hence, only PA2 staff (and agents, presented in the previous section) were asked this question.

All four Assistant Unit Supervisors thought that public safety would increase as a result of parole reform. They mentioned that agents had more time now to get to know offenders, establish rapport with them, investigate their behavior, intervene in their lives and have a preventive role. It was noted that agents now had a greater ability to impact the decisions a parolee makes, to encourage them to make better decisions. It was also mentioned that agents now had more time to target ‘nuisance’ parolees and look for PALS.

Parolee’s point of view

We asked supervisors whether parole reform had been positive, negative or neutral from the parolee’s point of view.

Five of the eight supervisors thought the parolee response had been positive. These supervisors commented that, due to the new initial/comprehensive interview questions, parolees were more likely to think that DAPO cared about them. It was noted that parolees interacted more with their agent now, because agents had more time, that there was greater access to programs because agents were more likely to refer to resources, and that parolees were more motivated to achieve progress because it was now documented. One supervisor reported that a parolee brought his whole family to the CCR, and that families were buying in more to their child’s parole, rather than “being on the receiving end”. Two supervisors also noted, however, that first-termers were more positive towards parole reform than old-timers, and that some parolees were not ready for change.

Barriers and roadblocks to implementation

Supervisors were asked their views on potential barriers or roadblocks to the rollout of parole reform.

Again, similar areas of concern were nominated by supervisors as agents. Six supervisors commented on the resources (e.g., number of staff) and budget needed for a rollout. Several commented on the potentially negative impact of the current political climate. Again, staff acceptance and buy in was seen as a potential barrier. One supervisor noted that certain agents may view parole reform as lessening parolee accountability for their offense (presumably this supervisor was referring to the philosophical shift towards a rehabilitation model, and away from the traditional law enforcement model of supervision). Similarly, recruiting the ‘right sort of agents’ was mentioned, although not elaborated upon. Several supervisors also commented on the public buy in, and the negative public image of parole in the community. The need to increase the public image of parole was also mentioned by agents, and deserves further clarification. Many staff felt that they had been operating in the community in anonymity, and that the public did not have a thorough understanding or appreciation of their role. It was felt that parole reform increased their visibility in the community, by increasing their interaction with families, service providers, and employers, and generally having to ‘knock on doors’ more. Many agents thought that some good publicity about DAPO would help them as they went about the business of supervision.

Other comments were that a rollout would be messy, since some units would be using the new system and some the old system; the importance of training so that agents could learn the new system properly; the need for more services/

PAROLEE’S VIEWPOINT

“In general it’s probably been positive – they have more attention and they’re appreciating that. They’ve never had this kind of help before. They should have had this before, but caseloads were too high”

“Parolees say they are happy. The goals sheet makes the parolee do things”

“Most are neutral. They don’t like to be pressured. They don’t like to do goals. If guys showed up to the CCR, I would say it’s been positive, but people don’t show up”

ROADBLOCKS

“Public buy in will be difficult – we have functioned in anonymity for quite a while to allow the parolee privacy, which has reduced the image of parole. Probation gets more of the attention and limelight in the public’s eye”

programs; lack of staff knowledge about EBP; and lack of consistency at the supervisory level due to a history within DAPO of not training supervisors (until the recent introduction of the PA3 academy).

Determining the success of CPSRM

We were interested to ask supervisors how they thought DAPO would determine the success of the new parole model.

Six supervisors named recidivism rates as the determining criterion of success of parole reform. They also mentioned other outcome measures, such as revocation rates, the proportion of parolees discharged after 13 months on parole (compared with those retained on parole), and the number of parolees referred to treatment. One

supervisor mentioned that, if DAPO achieved standardization of procedures, then that would be a successful outcome.

Further comments

Again, at the end of the interview supervisors were free to make additional comments, which are listed below:

“When it first started, I thought this was a joke. Now I’ve been part of the pilot I see it’s a much better way to go. I’m excited. It’s more manageable. I hope it works. I’m optimistic.”

“They have raised the standard for a reason – what we were doing before wasn’t working. The issue is changing the mentality of agents, rather than parole reform per se.”

“By hiring individuals from more diverse backgrounds (probation, college degrees, other work experience, outside of CDCR) we can only enrich the pool, compared with taking lateral transfers from CDCR.”

“We need to educate the community with what we’re doing. We need better automation – SOMS – so that information is live and fresh. We need reduced caseloads – agents get to know people more, instead of putting out fires. This pilot is unique because it fully implemented everything the PRTF came up with.”

“Morale is low now – we’re being asked to do parole reform but there’s talk of moving parole to the counties. It’s good that SAC has been flexible and listening. All agents have had the opportunity to provide input, which made it a positive experience overall. The standard has been set - and it’s a high standard - and in order to meet it we need people with these skills and qualifications.”

“I thought our system was good before – the only problem being the high caseloads that prevented agents from doing quality work. Ideally we need lower caseloads.”

“I have safety concerns with doing the initial/comprehensive interview at the house. We should not discourage parolees to report/test on OD day at the office - there should be some discretion built into the system. We have good leadership at this unit, with good organization and good numbers – the supervisor has done a good job.”

“Overall we have to look at change over the long term to see the difference. Our department is taking the time to focus on the pilot and make adjustments – for once, HQ is hearing us at the field level. They are investing a lot in the success of the program. Plus CEPP and UCI are looking at what worked, what hasn’t, so it’s not just a CDCR thing – we are taking on external people to improve it as well. It’s bigger than just CDCR/DAPO.”

“One issue I have is discharging the parolee – I’m concerned that the new discharge review form will mean they won’t discharge anyone. If someone is caught drinking they’ll be on parole for 3 years, even though they are not a risk. If they get 4 dirties a year they won’t discharge, which takes away discretion. We need to track discharge rates as well.”

“HQ wants agents to change but sometimes they are not willing to change their viewpoint. They’ve been good with forms, but there is a wall. Some staff were on the task force and they won’t give up their ideas. They are digging in, tweaking around the edges but resistant to change at the top.”

“Micromanaging is burying people. I understand accountability, but it’s not agent-friendly. There’s a domino effect if one agent goes out sick. Agents are stressed. You need more give and take and less micromanagement, or you’ll get resistance. Management are far removed from being a PA1 – it’s a whole different ball game now. There’s too much work. Agents here want to look

SUCCESS OF CPSRM

“A slight change in recidivism would be a success. Even 3% of 140,000 parolees – just a small percentage change would mean a significant number of people”

“Now the parolee has hope and thinks ‘I can do this’ we need to look at the numbers”

good. But realistically, will it work across the state? We have a low transient rate - what about Compton? We're massaging it to work."

"The pilot had willing participants. Now is a bad time because everyone is disgruntled. You've got disgruntled people, and I'm one of them."

Conclusions from PA2/PA3 interviews

Many of the same conclusions can be drawn from supervisor feedback as agent feedback (presented in the previous section); we will not re-state these findings here. Therefore, readers are asked to consider the broad findings we discuss in this section in conjunction with those presented earlier.

Supervisors were fairly positive

First, supervisors on the whole were more positive towards parole reform than were agents. Only two of the eight supervisors expressed any doubt or reluctance about parole reform during the interviews; these supervisors nevertheless showed strong leadership qualities and appeared to have 'bought in' to the program. Supervisors tended to have a 'bigger picture' view than agents, and were more likely to say that parole reform had improved the quality of agent-parolee interactions and was likely to result in improved public safety.

Supervisors implemented parole reform well

The second broad conclusion was that, across the board, supervisors did an outstanding job of implementing parole reform. Supervisors did not 'cut corners' or 'turn a blind eye' – they made sure that every detail of parole reform was implemented at their unit, and that all agents aimed for, and achieved, the standards required.

The parole reform team did a good job

The third conclusion was that the parole reform team from DAPO HQ excelled at assisting supervisors throughout the pilot. All supervisors had only positive things to say about the ongoing support they received from HQ. Personnel were accessible and responsive, and many avenues of support (email, web-based, site visits) were available to supervisors.

Good leadership overcame staff resistance

Fourth, the pilot showed that the belief that 'seasoned' agents would be less accepting of change in general, and the move toward a social work model in particular, may in fact be a myth. Since interviews were conducted on the condition of anonymity, we do not wish to single out particular units. However, it was apparent that strong leadership within a unit overcame initial reluctance on the part of veteran agents. Although we do not have quantitative data on the background characteristics of agents, and are therefore making conclusions based on the number of agents we interviewed who were classified as either positive or negative at the units as well as subjective evidence about their time in the job, there did not seem to be a strong correlation between an agent's age (or years of experience) and their acceptance of reform. On many occasions, veteran agents close to retirement were extremely happy, just as younger agents with fewer years of experience were extremely unhappy. It appeared that strong leadership was just as important in gaining staff acceptance as the characteristics of the agents themselves.

Unit leadership needs to allow agents some 'wriggle room'

The next, related, conclusion was that, while 'strong' leadership was extremely important, leaders also needed to be flexible and occasionally 'waive specs' in extreme circumstances in order to maintain unit harmony. Many agents reported feeling stretched, micromanaged and 'nitpicked' during the pilot, struggling with the new procedures, changes to forms, and sometimes extra cases if other agents were out (which resulted in a 'domino effect' where more pressure was placed on the agents who were left). There was also upwards pressure for supervisors to 'pass inspection' during audits and QA visits. Supervisors, in being selected for the pilot implementation, understandably wanted their unit to appear in a good light and withstand the scrutiny from HQ. Supervisors may have thus faced competing priorities during the pilot, wanting on occasion to give their agents a little breathing space, but also wanting to satisfy the strict requirements of the pilot. The interview data suggest that a 'strong but flexible' leadership style may be more effective than a 'strong but rigid' style.

Leadership matters

This finding that ‘leadership matters’ has significant implications for the rollout of parole reform. If an effective Unit Supervisor is able to overcome initial staff resistance, what happens when supervisors are asked to implement the new supervision policies if they are not on board? One suggestion, already mentioned in the previous section, would be to potentially ‘grandfather in’ change, starting with units who volunteer to be involved. This would give units with resistant supervisors more time for the supervisor to either retire or transfer to a different position within the organization.

Standardized tracking systems are needed

Another broad conclusion was that most supervisors were concerned with the lack of a systematic way of tracking several new procedures (for example, the timing of the CCR). Supervisors had been forced to develop their own methods, involving either automated spreadsheets or a clipboard hung on the wall. This is something that should be looked at prior to broader implementation.

Recruitment practices should be looked at

Finally, supervisors recognized inconsistency in both the acceptance of change among their staff, and their skill level. Some supervisors questioned whether the current pool of agents had the necessary skills to take on the new role, and, as a consequence, they questioned current DAPO hiring practices favoring lateral transfers of CDCR staff as opposed to more widely recruiting people with a broad range of backgrounds and work experience.

6. FURTHER RESEARCH

This qualitative research is one component of the CPSRM process evaluation currently taking place. By the end of 2011, it is expected that CEBC will have completed the other components of the process evaluation – a study of parole agent attitudes, a behavioral study examining agent speech patterns during agent-parolee interactions, as well as a qualitative analysis of CPSRM documentation. We will produce a report that consolidates these different research methodologies and provides DAPO with information that we hope will be useful in the policy decisions it faces. Until then, we hope that this stand-alone report has achieved its goal of collecting and synthesizing feedback from pilot site staff about their experiences – both positive and negative – in order to reflect on what has been achieved so far and better understand the way forward for parole reform.

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APPENDIX A: PA1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Workload

1. Can you tell me about your current caseload and how long you have been in your current position.
2. How has your caseload changed since the introduction of parole reform?
3. Is your workload now more manageable, less manageable or about the same, compared with before parole reform?
4. Has parole reform changed how much time you spend on the different tasks in your job?
5. Has parole reform changed the amount of time you spend with parolees face to face?
6. Do you think the contact requirements under parole reform are appropriate? Have you ever had difficulty meeting the minimum number of contacts?
7. Have the new forms introduced with parole reform made your job easier, harder or about the same?
8. Has parole reform made your job easier in any way? Has it made it more difficult in any way?
9. If your caseload was to increase, what component(s) of parole reform could be dropped to manage your workload? Why is that component less important, in your opinion? What is the maximum number of cases you could manage comfortably at the moment?
10. Has parole reform changed the way you feel about your job? Has it changed the way you feel about DAPO?

Training

1. Did the parole reform training sessions give you the skills/knowledge you needed to operate under the new model?
2. Would you like to receive any additional training relating to parole reform?
3. How could training be improved for other units as parole reform gets rolled out?
4. What ongoing support is available to you regarding parole reform?
5. To what extent have you read, or do you refer to, the new policy manual?
6. How can the new policy manual be improved?
7. In your experience, are there any elements of parole reform that are more difficult to implement on a day to day basis?
8. Are there any elements of parole reform that, in your opinion, have not been fully implemented?

New Model Elements

1. To what extent has parole reform changed your involvement in the pre-release planning of parolees?
2. To what extent has parole reform changed the way you use a case plan to guide supervision?
3. Has parole reform changed the input that parolees have into their case plan and supervision?
4. Has parole reform changed the way you identify or address a parolee's criminogenic needs?
5. Has parole reform changed the way you do case conferencing?
6. Do you think parole reform has changed the way you speak with parolees?
7. Do you think that motivational interviewing is an appropriate or useful tool for parole agents?
8. To what extent do you use motivational interviewing in your contacts with parolees?
9. Has there been any change to the availability or allocation of programming since parole reform? In your opinion, is the level of available programming sufficient?
10. Has parole reform changed the way you reward or provide incentives to parolees?
11. Has parole reform changed the discharge consideration process?

Summary

1. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of parole reform compared with what you used to do?
2. Can you see any drawbacks?
3. Do you think parole reform will have an impact on public safety?
4. From the parolee's point of view, do you think parole reform has been a positive, negative or neutral?
5. Can you think of any barriers or roadblocks to implementation?
6. Can you think of any ways to improve the implementation of parole reform at other units?
7. Are there any other comments you would like to make, that have not been covered in this interview?

APPENDIX B: PA2 AND PA3 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background

1. Describe your current position. How long have you been in this position?
2. Were you involved in the development of parole reform, prior to its implementation?
3. What is your role in the implementation of parole reform?

Workload

1. Compared with the way things used to be, has parole reform had an impact on your workload, either in terms of how busy you are, or how much time you spend on different tasks?
2. How difficult or easy has it been to keep caseloads at 48:1 in your unit? How have you achieved this?
3. In your opinion, what is the maximum number of cases your agents could manage comfortably at the moment?
4. If caseloads were to increase, what component(s) of parole reform could be dropped to manage agent workloads? Why is that component less important, in your opinion?

Training

1. Did the parole reform training sessions give your agents the skills/knowledge they needed to operate under the new model?
2. Do your agents need additional training in parole reform?
3. How could training be improved for other units as parole reform gets rolled out?

Implementation

1. Do you think that parole reform has changed the way that your agents interact with parolees?
2. Have you sought clarification or guidance on how to implement parole reform?
3. What ongoing support is available to you regarding parole reform?
4. To what extent have you read, or do you refer to, the new policy manual?
5. How can the policy manual be improved?
6. In your experience, are there any elements of parole reform that are more difficult to implement on a day to day basis?
7. Are there any elements of parole reform that, in your opinion, have not been fully implemented?
8. What would you need to make parole reform work? How could things be better?

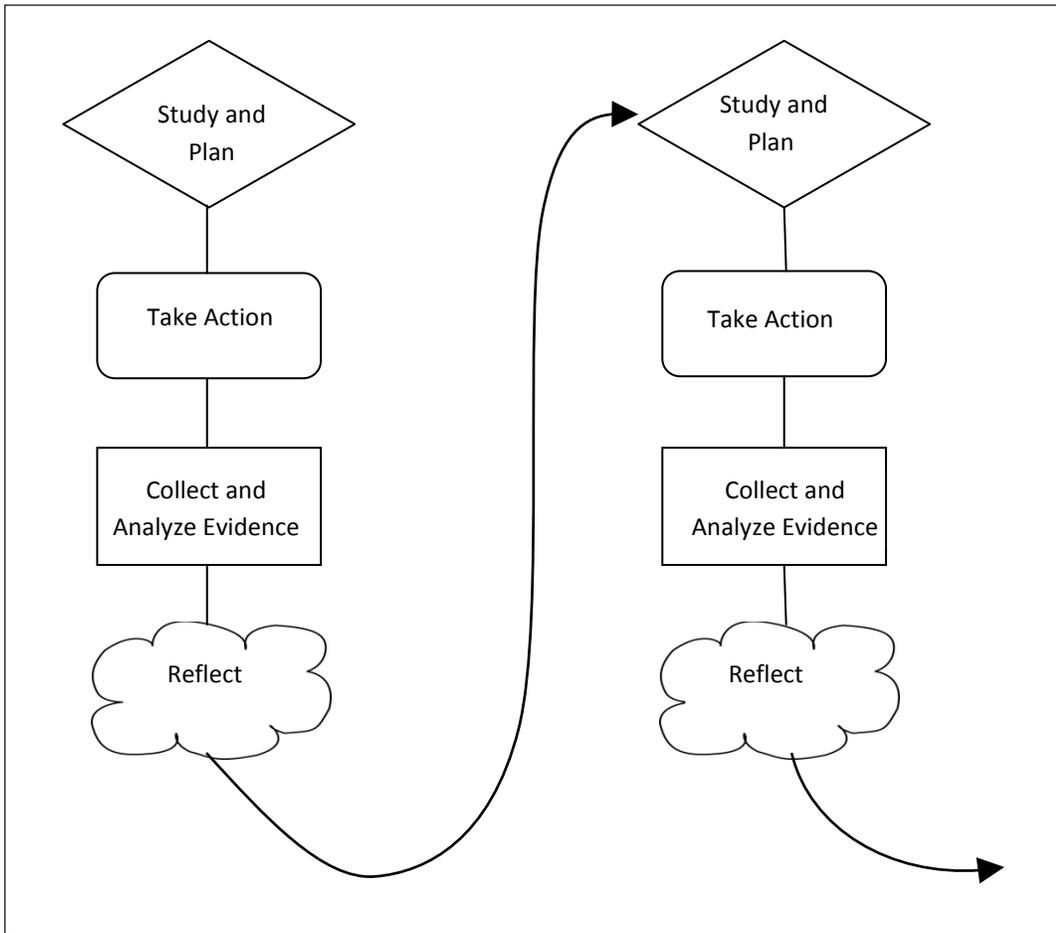
Summary

1. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of parole reform compared with what you used to do?
2. Can you see any drawbacks?
3. Do you think parole reform will have an impact on public safety?
4. From the parolee's point of view, do you think parole reform has been positive, negative or neutral?
5. Can you think of any barriers or roadblocks to implementation?
6. Can you think of any ways to improve the implementation of parole reform at other units?
7. How will DAPO determine the success of the new parole model?
8. Are there any other comments you would like to make, that have not been covered in this interview?

APPENDIX C: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTION RESEARCH

Action Research (AR) “is a process of deep inquiry into one’s practices in service of moving towards and envisioned future” (Riel, 2010). It is used as a research method when the goal is to better understand what is going on in a workplace in order to improve it. It differs from traditional ‘positivistic’ research methods in significant ways. First, AR promotes the idea that knowledge is socially constructed, and that researchers are involved in the process and do not strive to detach themselves and be ‘objective’ and value-free. Second, AR focuses on ways to collaboratively improve the system or organization – a “commitment to action” (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003) - rather than merely providing a snapshot of what is going on. This process of reflection and improvement is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Cycle of Action Research (Riel, 2010)



In the United States, psychologist Kurt Lewin popularized an AR perspective in the 1940s. Action research most often occurs in the context of the organization; it is popular in fields like education because it provides educators and practitioners a way of continually improving their methods of instruction. The journal *Action Research* was introduced in 2003 to publish the growing body of research using this approach.

A review of the literature could not find any AR studies in the domains of parole or probation. A small number of studies were found in the field of policing research, looking at leadership (Mead, 2002), ethics training (Adlam, 1998), and the use of technology in training (Davison, 2001). In Australia, a Police Commissioner recently appealed for more AR on policing, arguing that the two traditional research paradigms - critical research and policy research - had produced disappointing results that had failed to significantly impact police practices, and which perpetuated a 'dialogue of the deaf' between academics, on the one hand, and police practitioners on the other (Bradley & Nixon, 2009). This criticism was argued further by Rosenbaum (2010), who recommended that AR and policy research traditions should be merged wherever possible so that "police can learn about the importance of systematic analysis....and researchers will also learn about the importance of producing timely, policy-relevant, and readable research findings" (Rosenbaum, 2010, p. 148). This has occurred with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Locally Initiated Research Partnerships in Policing program, in which police and researchers jointly select a topic of interest and collaborate during all phases of research design, implementation, and interpretation of findings (see McEwen, 1999).

We used an AR approach for the interview component of the broader process evaluation. In depth, anonymous interviews were used to understand the experiences of parole agents at the pilot units. These experiences will be used to assist researchers in interpreting findings from other research methodologies used during the process evaluation. They will also help DAPO policy-makers reflect on the progress that has been made with parole reform to date, and refine their vision for the future of parole reform.