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CLARK COUNTY CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Electronic Home Confinement

Program Evaluation

First Six Months

August 22, 1988 to February 28, 1989

CLARK COUNTY CORRECTIONS
ELECTRONIC HOME CONFINEMENT - SIX-MONTH PROGRAM EVALUATION

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ACQUISITIONS

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Is electronic home confinement punishment?

"It does, indeed, become very confining." "A lot of stress."

"Too little sleep." "You get house-a-tosis!" "My roommate thought it was an invasion of his privacy." "It's awful."

—sample participant responses

ELECTRONIC HOME CONFINEMENT

Background and Overview

Home confinement as a tool for jail population management was first conceived as the final step in a program of progressive decarceration called the Route Out. The Route Out program continues to be developed within current planning for a Work Center detention facility in Clark County.

In late 1987, when Clark County's main jail overcrowding problems reached critical mass, and when it became clear that Work Center siting issues could not be quickly resolved, it was decided to test home confinement as a jail alternative in its own right. To effectively stand on its own—that is, without the preparatory steps provided by in-custody programming—it was further decided that home confinement should be augmented by an electronic surveillance system.

As approved by the Clark County Law & Justice Council, the Corrections Department's Electronic Home Confinement (EHC) program began operation on August 23, 1988. Sentenced misdemeanors were targeted and a capacity lid of 30 participants was set for the six month pilot period. The program was staffed by a case management team consisting of a corrections counselor II (probation officer) and a corrections counselor I (technician). One case management team was expected to ultimately handle an EHC caseload of up to 60 participants.

EHC planners opted to use an electronic system which provided surveillance by programmed contact. HITEK equipment was chosen, based on the simplicity of the system, the stability of the company, and a low lease price. HITEK's system makes use of a wristlet worn by the offender, and a verifier attached to the offender's phone. A central computer, located at the EHC facility,

is programmed to make a specified number of calls to the offender during various time periods in a 24-hour day. When the call is received the offender must answer identifying questions, then match the wristlet to the verifier in an "electronic handshake." The central computer records all calls, reporting problems and violations, and can page the EHC Officer if necessary. Use of the wristlet and verifier is simple to understand, so that EHC Officers can accomplish installation without a visit to the offender's home.

EHC participants are screened by criteria including community stability and assessment of risk. Corrections Department Jail Classification Specialists screen jail inmates and refer likely candidates to the EHC program. District Court Judges also refer offenders directly from court to be screened for EHC. Direct referrals from court are those offenders that the Judge wants to serve time in jail, but is willing to consider EHC as an alternative to all or part of the sentence. Prospective candidates must have a telephone and not use call-forwarding or an answering device during their time on home confinement.

A \$10.00 per day fee is assessed from each EHC offender. The fee is due in advance with two weeks, or \$140.00, to be paid upon placement in the program. Individuals who are unable to pay the fee can work it off in the Corrections Department's Work Crew program. However, very few people have satisfied their fees by this method (see monthly data chart, p.4).

Participants must sign an agreement comprising the terms and conditions of their EHC supervision. Based on background, current living style, and elements of the offense, a home confinee may be required to obtain substance abuse treatment, attend anger management counseling, take antabuse or submit to random urine screening. People who are unemployed are automatically hooked up with the Corrections Department's Offender Employment Services program. All participants must report in person to the EHC office at least once a week, and can expect an unannounced home visit at least once a week.

Violations of the terms of supervision are handled at two levels. A minor technical violation may be disposed of by an in-house administrative hearing, with perhaps a return to a higher level of surveillance or the withdrawal of privileges as the sanction. Serious violations and violations due to the commission of a new offense are taken before the original sentencing Judge for action, usually with a recommendation that the offender be required to serve additional jail time.

To assist the evaluation process, each participant terminating from the program, either positively or negatively, is asked to answer a questionnaire about his/her experience being on EHC. The sample responses at the beginning of this report were taken from these participant questionnaires.

STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS
(8/22/88 to 2/28/89)

PARTICIPANT DATA

Participants - 100
Terminations - 78

Average daily population - 11.13
*Terminations by violations - 19 (rate: 24%)

*A high violation rate is expected during the first months of a new program, as participants test compliance requirements. All violations have been of a technical nature; there have been no violations due to new offenses.

JAIL DAYS SAVED

Jail days saved, 8/22/88 - 2/28/89: 2,104 days
Jail cost savings, at \$47.00 per day: \$ 98,888.00

FEE COLLECTION

Total revenue from fees: \$ 22,250.00
Fee assessed: \$10.00 per day
Collection rate: 105%

Fee assessments worked off: 864 Work Crew hours @ \$5.13 =
\$ 4,432.00 cost savings to County

PROGRAM COST: Reduced to \$1.60 per day by the sixth month.

NOTE: Monthly raw data figures are charted on the following page.

MONTH-BY-MONTH DATA
8/88 TO 2/89

SUBJECT	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	TOTALS
Participants	5	5	5	16	20	24	25	100
Terminations	1	3	8	10	17	17	22	78
Term. by Viol.	1	3	2	4	2	4	3	19
Crew Days to work off fees	0	22	12	18	7	24	25	108
Jail Days Saved	30	158	140	280	353	522	621	2104
Jail Costs Saved @ \$47./day	\$1410	\$7426	\$6580	\$13160	\$16591	\$24534	\$29187	\$98888
Revenue from Fee Collection	\$910	\$1400	\$1110	\$3090	\$3660	\$5840	\$6240	\$22250

DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY: Participant numbers held steady during the first three months, which allowed new staff to slowly implement procedures and learn the computer system. The rapid increase in participants during November can be attributed to an organized promotion of the program. Thereafter, a stable rate of increase was established and maintained through the end of the pilot period.

As indicated by termination numbers, the EHC population has contained a high number of short term participants, i.e. sentences of less than 30 days. This was neither planned nor desired, but emerged as the preferred manner for District Court Judges to try out the new program. A short term population, as expected, created additional workload in case processing, equipment monitoring, and violation activity. During the following months, a concerted effort will be made to recruit participants having sentences of 30 days or more. In this way turnover can be stabilized and workload reduced as the program population grows.

Terminations by violation reveal a 24% failure rate. This is not interpreted negatively, however. During the first months of a new program, participants typically test compliance requirements. Understanding this, EHC program staff made the decision to strictly enforce compliance with program requirements as a means to ensure program integrity. It is expected that, as offenders become aware of how EHC operates, the violation rate will come down. The fact that no violations during the six month period were due to new offenses tends to affirm this strategy.

EHC PROGRAM COST COMPARISONS

During the first six months of operation, the Electronic Home Confinement program reduced its overall cost per participant day from \$21.19 (gross average) down to \$1.60 (net for the month) in February 1989.

The gross average cost of \$21.19 per participant day was reduced to a net average of \$10.61/day through the collection of \$22,250.00 in fees during the six-month period. This represents an extraordinary fee collection rate of 105%, made possible by a three-pronged fee policy which insists on: 1) payment in advance, with 2) two weeks of fees to be paid at the outset, and 3) no refunds for participants who terminate by violation.

The further reduction in cost per day, to \$1.60 by February, is attributable to the number of participants nearing equipment capacity. It should be noted that even the gross average figure of \$21.19/day represents a tidy savings from the average jail bed cost of \$47.00 per day. Cost per participant day is calculated as follows:

- A. For the period 8/23/88 thru 2/28/89. (Program days, 189;
Participant days, 2104.)

Basic staff	\$ 31,709.00	
Equipment	12,867.00	
Total	\$ 44,576.00	Gross cost

$$\frac{\text{Gross cost}}{\text{Part. days}} = \frac{\$44,576}{2104} = \underline{\$21.19 \text{ gross cost per participant day}}$$

$$\$44,576 \text{ (gross cost)} - \$22,250 \text{ (revenue)} = \$22,326 \text{ (net cost)}$$

$$\frac{\text{Net cost}}{\text{Part.das}} = \frac{\$22,376}{2104} = \underline{\$10.61 \text{ net cost per participant day}}$$

- B. For February 1989. (Program days, 28; Participant days, 621.)

Basic staff	\$ 5,073.	
Equipment	2,160.	
Total	\$ 7,233.	Gross cost
	-6,240.	revenue
	\$ 993.	net cost

$$\frac{\text{Net cost}}{\text{Part.das}} = \frac{\$ 993}{621} = \underline{\$1.60 \text{ net cost per participant day}}$$

EHC PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

PARTICIPATION BY OFFENSE AND LENGTH OF SENTENCE

<u>OFFENSE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>AVERAGE SENTENCE</u>
DWS (Driving While Suspended)	52	37 days
DWI (Driv. While Intoxicated)	4	22 days
Simple Assault	10	18 days
Other offenses	16	24 days
Multiple Offenses	18	40 days
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>33 days</u>

These figures also reflect the high number of short-term program participants. It is interesting to note that DWS offenses accounted for over half of EHC offenders, as originally planned, and also included most of the 30-day+ sentences.

Assault cases were placed on EHC only with the approval of the sentencing Judge. Two Simple Assault offenders also were serving time on other charges. Six of the 12 Assault charges were for domestic violence. Five of the six District Court Judges approved EHC for at least one Assault case as diagrammed below:

<u>Judge</u>	<u>Assault Cases</u>	<u>Domestic Violence</u>	<u>DV Not Indicated</u>
Schreiber	6	4	2
Fritzler	3	1	2
Zimmerman	1		1
Stoker	1*		1
Moilanen	1*	1	

*Cases with Simple Assault among multiple offenses.

REFERRAL METHOD/NEGATIVE TERMINATION COMPARISON by JUDGE

<u>Judge</u>	<u>Total Sentenced</u>	<u>Court to EHC</u>	<u>Jail to EHC</u>	<u>Total Neg Terms</u>	<u>Ct Ref Neg Term</u>	<u>Jail Ref Neg Term</u>
Fritzler	29	15	14	6	4	2
Moilanen	19	3	16	4	1	3
Zimmerman	13	7	6	2	0	2
Stoker	8	8	0	3	3	0
Eiesland	7	4	3	2	1	1
Schreiber	23	20	3	2	2	0
Pro Tem	1	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	100	58	42	19	11	8

Comments:

Three Judges account for 71% of EHC referrals. Judges vary on apparent referral preference (direct vs. indirect), with a slight majority (58%) of referrals coming directly from court. The important goal of getting participant numbers up and program costs down mitigated against dwelling on the referral source during these early months. It is recognized that persistent large numbers of direct court referrals will expose the program to charges of "widening the net" and not genuinely impacting jail overcrowding.

The method of referral seems to have no effect on negative terminations, with the failure rate being the same in either case.

ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

HITEK's programmed contact equipment was selected to enhance supervision of EHC offenders through electronic surveillance. HITEK lease costs were by far the lowest, but even more attractive was the simplicity of the system. Additional factors in the choice included the (relative) length of time that HITEK systems have been used in the field nationwide, and the ability to add radio frequency equipment later without changing systems.

In spite of problems encountered, EHC officers report that overall the HITEK equipment has proven worthy of our choice. Computer installation was fraught with glitches, so that the promised two-day training for staff became a fast four hour session; in the first 30 days continual computer problems necessitated a replacement and, happily, an upgrade which rectified the situation. Of the original 25 verifiers received, seven malfunctioned and had to be replaced; it was then discovered that turnaround time was not the 24 hours promised, but more like 14 days. Finally HITEK concluded that the Telsol unit was causing the verifiers to malfunction, and it too was replaced with an enhanced unit.

Most of these problems, while frustrating to staff, were of the type to be expected given the nature of new programs. Of more serious consequence was the shortened training time. This was a direct result of the workload of the troubleshooter: this person's schedule was ridiculously tight so that he could not adjust and extend his stay to provide the needed training; and while he was working on installation he was frequently and continually interrupted by trouble calls from other areas. After installation, HITEK's response to our trouble calls was notably slow.

To HITEK's credit, the company reacted favorably to complaints—and EHC staff was not shy in communicating their expectations for fast, quality service—and by February HITEK service was described as "excellent." The company hired additional troubleshooters who respond to trouble calls within one hour, and who now provide 24-hour emergency service. To quote the EHC technician, "they learned that we are aggressive but diligent in our work and in order to meet our needs they had to make some changes in their operations." The company's shipping department also improved, and turnaround time has shortened considerably. HITEK's willingness to accommodate us is itself a mark of quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT PROGRAM PHASE: TO 1990

The remainder of 1989 will emphasize bringing EHC program capacity to its upper limit under the current staffing level. As was mentioned at the outset of this report, it is anticipated that current staff will be able to handle a caseload of up to 60. However, as the number of participants reaches and exceeds 30, workload procedures will be closely and regularly scrutinized to identify unnecessary or redundant practices and to look for opportunities to streamline methods. For example, already staff is complaining about the amount of time it takes to review week-end tapes on Monday mornings (2-1/2 to 3 hours). By frequent and close review, it will be possible during the next year to specify a client to staff caseload ratio based on procedural indicators as well as factors such as length of sentence and level of risk.

Despite problems, staff is satisfied with the electronic equipment leased from HITEK. It is felt that our experience has been no worse, and perhaps better than what would have been encountered with another vendor. At six months EHC officers have just now attained a comfortable working relationship with the HITEK system as well as company representatives. This is not the time for further experimentation.

As participant numbers gradually increase during 1989, an effort will be made to place offenders with longer sentences to serve, i.e. 30 days or more, and reduce the number of short-termers. This is expected to reduce workload by lowering the turn-over rate—which should also stabilize the EHC caseload. We may also have an opportunity to test the maximum optimum length of time on home confinement, generally accepted as about 120 days.

It is also expected that before year's end, the EHC program will be used occasionally for low-risk felons. Toward that end, we will be looking at the pretrial population where EHC could enhance Supervised Release for appropriate offenders.

Another project for early 1989 will be to do a more precise costing of the program. As noted earlier in this report (p.5), costs have thus far been based on basic EHC staff and equipment lease. Future budgeting will need to include indirect costs such as administration, programming provided by other units, supplies, plus department and County support services.

Electronic Home Confinement, as demonstrated during this six-month pilot period, appears to be an extremely cost-effective alternative to incarceration for low risk offenders, providing appropriate retribution and surveillance within a level of accountability that is higher than jail itself.

COMMENTS FROM EHC PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Each offender terminating the EHC program is asked to fill out a questionnaire recording his/her experience and reactions. Here is a sample of participant responses:

1. Impact of EHC: "It's hard to have guests."
"One could get programmed to never sleep right again."
"My kids behaved better" "My son was happy I was at home."
2. Were you able to Cheat? "It's inevitable to disobey. With supervision not very close, a person is not going to stay home."
(This offender was returned to jail for non-compliance.)
"I could have cheated but chose not to risk a longer sentence."
3. Compare to Jail: "I was able to keep my job and my house."
"It was better than jail, but about as boring."
"It kept everyone up during sleeping hours. I would prefer jail. (Back in court on a violation, this offender requested and received straight jail time rather than extended EHC.)"
4. How could EHC improve? "No calls after 2:30am."
"Put an alarm on the wristband to beep before you call."
"Make the recording in a female voice."
5. What's the longest someone should be on EHC?
"One year, it's better than jail."
"90 days, too much tension build-up."
"One month intervals with a week in between."
"30 days, you get cabin fever."
"14 days, you get too bored."
"None, its too hard on your nerves."