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MULTNOMAH COUNTY PROBATION TEAMS

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does and should be recognized as an instrument which lessens the social stigma attached to a conviction. It is a very great gesture on the part of the Chief Executive and in that sense should carry much weight in the rehabilitative process.⁶⁰ Although a pardon recipient may not claim as a matter of right the reinstatement of professional licenses or the removal of other disabilities which

Grassmold v. Supreme Court of Illinois, 557 F.2d 122 at 126 (7th Cir. 1977).

may be grounded in the good character requirement, he should be allowed to claim an inference, if not presumption, that he has regained the stature of a person of good character. No one should doubt that a Presidential pardon does and should carry very great persuasive value in the community and before licensing authorities.⁶¹ Maybe its greatest value, though, is in the personal satisfaction which its recipient experiences.

Multnomah County Probation Teams

An Example That Is Working

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MULTNOMAH County Probation Services is a county agency providing supervision and counseling for an average probation caseload of 2,500 misdemeanor and felony offenders in the metropolitan area of Portland, Oregon. In addition, this agency completes 1,000 presentence investigations for the District and Circuit Courts in its jurisdiction. Eighteen months ago a committee from within the agency was formed to review the general procedures utilized to provide services for this caseload and the community. The work of this committee was assisted by the progressive atmosphere and the active support of both our agency administration and the larger Division of Corrections.

The committee spent six months evaluating the agency's present activities, its clients, the community, and the agency's goals. The work of this committee was assisted by the fact that three of its members had earlier taken part in a 2-week training program on "Community Resources Management Teams" (CRMT) offered by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). This training provided a framework for study that actively brought into consideration the community and the needs of the clients. The

results of committee study resemble the CRMT team model but in a larger sense are unique to the needs of this agency.

This committee found the following conditions existing in the agency:

- (1) Extremely high caseloads (150-200) with no budgetary increases in sight.
- (2) Clients with a variety of needs in reference to supervision, referral and counseling.
- (3) Three to four distinct neighborhoods separated by social and economic characteristics.
- (4) Case plans individually developed by counselors with little staff consultation.
- (5) High priority (by necessity) given to crisis situations resulting in less time to individually address each client.
- (6) Considerable duplication in the intake and presentence processes.
- (7) A talented, but varied, staff pressed to its limits by caseload and court pressures.
- (8) An individual case record keeping system difficult to maintain due to the high caseload.

While these were not the only conditions identified, they were the main areas determined to need major attention in any plan or change. The plan utilized in the program review was unique and extremely thorough. A more complete outline of this review process can be obtained by writing this author.

The results of this committee, with their recommendations for reorganization, were distributed

Editor's Note: A lesson plan has been developed for use with this article as well as the same author's "Blueprint for Developing Probation Teams," which appeared in the June 1978 issue of *Federal Probation*. The lesson plan is available from John W. Sisson, Chief, Local Training Branch, Education and Training Division, Federal Judicial Center, 1520 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

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to the staff and management for review. It was then decided that a pilot team should be set up to test many of the elements of the team structure recommended by the committee. This team operated for approximately 6 months and then, after positive reviews, the system was instituted throughout the agency.

This reorganization resulted in the reduction of the Intake PSI Unit from six to three counselors and the placement of a larger number of counselors in the Field Services Unit. The Field Services Unit was then divided into two service teams composed of two secretaries, five counselors, and volunteer aides and a third team composed of one secretary, three counselors, and volunteer aides, with each decentralized in the community.

The Team Process

The process redesigns and functionally restructures the operation of Probation Services. The key elements of the system are (1) a greater investment of efforts during the initial period of each probation, (2) the formation of an orderly process of client problem identification and client classification, (3) establishment of service categories corresponding to the needs of the clients and the protection of the community, (4) individual case plan development utilizing the skills of a group of staff persons with a variety of skills and interest areas, and, (5) the utilization of community resources as an integral part of the rehabilitative process.

Each team was set up as a unit within itself, able to manage and serve all clients living within its geographic boundaries. Considerable emphasis was placed on teamwork and team initiative. To aid in this effort, considerable attention had to be given to team building. This process involved group meetings, group exercises, and psychological testing. We found that, while counselors had worked next to each other for years, they were not thoroughly aware of individual skills and abilities. Now, they are expected to utilize each counselor's talents and to depend on one another as vital links in the service process.

Intake and Case Development

Each case, both probation and presentence, referred to a team goes through a rather thorough screening and classification process before an individual program is developed for each client. This process involves an information gathering interview, the completion of a needs assessment,

case classification involving point scores related to client stability factors, and, depending on the degree of stability, a staffing involving at least three team counselors (all presentence cases involve a staffing). This process may also involve a behavioral inventory and consultation with a psychologist. This rather involved screening and problem identification process is usually completed within a period of 3 weeks after receiving the client from the court. Critical to this process have been the client present staffing sessions. Clients who are skilled at manipulating individual interview sessions are unable to exercise this control in the staffing process. The varied skills of the staffing participants are able to be combined to focus in on the nature of the client's problem and needs. The client leaves the staffing session with a complete understanding of what is expected of him and the belief that the "team" is aware of him and concerned with his progress.

As mentioned before, not all probation cases experience this initial staffing. If the case classification score is sufficiently high, which could indicate a high degree of stability, and, if there is not judged to be a high degree of potential danger to the community, the case would be assigned to the monitoring file. This would occur after any needed community referrals had been made and conditions such as restitution had been established with the client. This large caseload is regularly monitored through the aid of a visually coded alphabetical log book. Each client completes a monthly report form and is personally interviewed on a quarterly basis. Any case experiencing difficulties requiring a higher degree of services would be raised to a higher classification following a formal or informal staffing session.

Treatment Plan Development

In the staffing session or the intake interview, in the case of monitored cases, an individual treatment plan is developed. This involves consideration of the client's strengths and weaknesses, the results of the needs assessment, court conditions, team resources, and community resources. This plan is written out and identifies referrals, number and nature of contacts and, most importantly, behavior scales. Behavior scaling might be compared to client contracts. It involves the identification of problem areas and the further identification of measureable behavior that could assist the client in alleviating any particular problem. The client is aware of the scale

and when progress is made the behavior is reinforced through the client's advancement on this scale.

Critical to the developed case plan is the assignment to an individual counselor. Each counselor on the team is identified with a specific caseload in relation to the amount of services needed and, in a particular situation, the nature of the problem area. Each team is composed of one Mental Health specialist with a caseload not to exceed 50 cases; three counselors with caseloads not to exceed 100 cases, requiring regular personal contact, intervention, and referral services; and one counselor plus aides who manage the larger monitored caseload of 350 cases composed of clients who, through the screening process, were determined to possess a fair degree of stability and were not felt to need a high degree of supervision and services. The clients in this latter category may possess a wide variety of conditions which may require monitoring and referral. While the categories and classification of counselors appear rather general, through the staffing process individual assignments are made to counselors best equipped to deal with identified client problem areas. It is in this area that team work and counselors' awareness of each other's skills become very important.

Treatment Plan Difficulties

If problems develop during the ongoing supervision of a probation case, the team can frequently be utilized to assist in the problem solution or plan changes. A staffing would be called at which time the problems would be identified and possible solutions discussed. The group effort in this situation usually results in a better secondary plan and has considerable impact on the client experiencing problems. An assignment to a new counselor or an ultimatum for certain behavior changes may be the outcome of this staffing. If this alternative is not successful, the court could be brought into the situation. This process results in more immediate and decisive action to stop problem situations and may reduce the number of costly court hearings.

Specialized Services

This process has relieved counselors of the high caseload pressures while at the same time it has directed our attention to caseload issues. By caseload issues, I mean areas of need experienced by a large number of our clients. As an agency, we

must encourage the development of specialized services to deal with these identified problem areas. Frequently, this requires coordinating established community services, but may involve establishing new programs within our agency structure. This has resulted in the expansion of the teams to include an employment specialist on a part-time basis through a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) sponsored program and shortly will include drug client trackers from a Treatment Alternatives to Street Crimes (TASC) federal grant program. Clients with alcohol problems are referred to one of three major service agencies who cooperate through information sharing. In addition to the outside services, staff members within teams have, on their own, set up specialized services to fit client need areas such as groups for assertiveness training, self-awareness, employment search, and general reporting and sharing. One-to-one volunteers are also utilized to assist specialized identified clients. Because of the development of these services we are seeing a greater degree of scrutiny being placed in the case assignment phases so that the skills of our counselors can be utilized to assist the client.

Summary

The elements of our team model are not individually new but are very innovative when combined into a total package. The process has resulted in a complete reorganization of our agency and a redefinition of services directed toward client needs. By spending a greater amount of time and effort in the initial period of probation, less effort is needed during the latter period of formal supervision. Through a sophisticated client screening process and problem identification, we are better equipped to spend more meaningful time and energy with clients needing our services. We now utilize the unique skills of each counselor and allow them to develop additional skills and areas of expertise.

The case record keeping system has also been changed to accommodate the changes in the new procedure and direction. The system *Progress Oriented Record Keeping* involves the step by step development of a case plan utilizing positive behavior change as the major objective.

This process has resulted in the considerable growth and development of our staff and a noticeable increase in the quality of services to our clients.

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