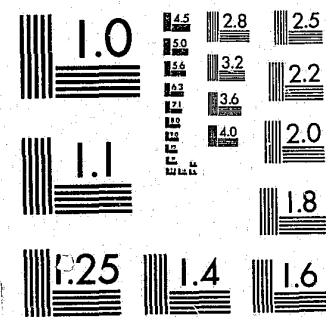


National Criminal Justice Reference Service

**ncjrs**

This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

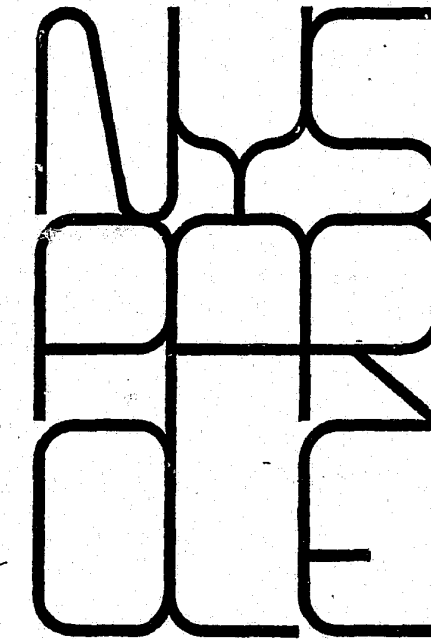
Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

3-29-82

CRJN  
7-22-82



SUMMARY OF  
FIRST YEAR EVALUATION OF THE  
SPECIAL PAROLE SUPERVISION PROGRAM  
FOR VIOLENT FELONY OFFENDERS

New York State Division of Parole

80495

NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF PAROLE

1450 Western Avenue Albany, New York 12203

EDWARD R. HAMMOCK  
Chief Executive Officer

EDWARD ELWIN  
Executive Director

STEVE YELICH  
Director of Parole Field Services

JAMES WILLIAMS  
Director of Parole Institutional Services

HERMAN GRABER  
Counsel

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF PAROLE:

EDWARD R. HAMMOCK, CHAIRMAN

WILLIAM J. BARNWELL

ADA F. JONES

MAURICE F. DEAN

JOHN J. MAFFUCCI

GERALD M. BURKE

WILHELMINA HOLLIDAY

THEODORE KIRKLAND

MANUEL PARRON

IRVING GREENBERG

MARIA RIVERA BUCHANAN

JOSEPH SALO

U.S. Department of Justice 80495  
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

New York State Division of  
Parole

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

Prepared By  
Walter V. Collier

Evaluation Project Team

Walter V. Collier, Director, Evaluation & Planning  
Joy Davidoff-Kroop, Program Research Specialist II  
Ricardo Nunez, Program Research Specialist II  
David Fry, Associate Computer Programmer/Analyst  
Steven D. Sontag, Senior Computer Programmer  
Deann M. Dysert, Senior Stenographer

Copyright © September 1980 by New York State Division of Parole.  
All Rights Reserved.

<u>CONTENTS</u>		<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgments . . . . .		i
Chapter 1. The VFO Parole Supervision Program . . . . .		1
Chapter 2. Results of Program Implementation Analysis . . .		3
Chapter 3. Case Supervision and Absconder Search Unit . . .		9
Chapter 4. Outcome of Parole Supervision . . . . .		16
Chapter 5. Cost-Effectiveness of Supervision Program . . .		23
Chapter 6. Conclusions and Recommendations . . . . .		27
Postscript . . . . .		30

### Acknowledgments

The evaluation of the special supervision program was the result of a lot of effort and exertions on the part of the evaluation team. As in most evaluations, there were problems in start-up and execution. But, thanks to the team members, the study was completed on time.

I would like to thank Barbara Broderick, Assistant Director of Evaluation & Planning, and Paul Kelly, Supervisor of EDP, for their contributions in collecting and analyzing the data.

Also, I would like to thank the staff of the Division's Central Monitoring Unit for their assistance in the data collection. Appreciation is also extended to the management staff in central office for their support.

Last, but certainly not least, the study is indebted to the Parole Officers in the special supervision program who cooperated in providing their feedback on the program.

### Chapter 1

#### THE VFO PAROLE SUPERVISION PROGRAM

In April 1979, the Division of Parole began an intensified community supervision program for parolees who had been convicted of a violent felony offense, as designated by the 1978 VFO Act. The program was appropriated 2.9 million dollars, and ran for a 12-month period. The primary goal of this program was to prevent violent felons under community supervision from committing new violent or other offenses.

There are three schools of thought on effectuating crime prevention: 1) increased law enforcement (surveillance and administration of punitive sanctions); 2) intensified rehabilitative services for offenders; and 3) some combination of the first and second approaches. The parole supervision program reflected the third approach.

Another assumption made by the program was that frequent contact with these (VFO) "high risk" parolees during the early months following prison release was necessary. The minimum number of monthly parolee contacts made by a parole officer under the most intensive supervision level prior to the SSP was three. The SSP called for six. The rationale behind this was related to statistical observations that most parolee violations occur during the early period of parole (first 6-12 months); and that if such violations were to be prevented, a parole officer must maintain close contact with his/her parolee during this critical period.

One final assumption was that a reduced or small caseload size of parolees would allow a parole officer more time to devote to the individual cases and thereby be in a better position to intervene in a case going sour before it reached a serious violation point.

What finally emerged as a model for the parole supervision program was:

If parole officers are better able to 1) identify the relative potential risks of VFO parolees to re-engage in criminal behavior; 2) identify the support needs of these parolees in readjusting to the community; 3) deliver counseling and referral services to the parolees; 4) maintain closer surveillance contacts; and 5) apprehend more quickly VFO parolee absconders, then the probability of reducing or containing recidivism among VFO parolees would be enhanced.



The purpose of this report is to present the results of an initial evaluation study of Parole's special supervision program for violent felony offenders. The study covered the first twelve months of the SSP, and focused on three major and interrelated areas of concern:

- 1) how the SSP was initially implemented; 2) the program's impact on VFO recidivism; and 3) the relative cost effectiveness of the program.

How a people-control or service program is implemented greatly influences the intended outcome of the program. This is particularly true for new programs in the public sector, where bureaucratic complexity often affects program outcomes even to the point of changing legislative intent (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Rivlin, 1971; Williams, 1976). Whether a program produces timely or reliable results is, in part, a function of how long it takes to put the program in place and the number of clearance points for getting decisions made on what the program should look like, its scope, etc. (Pressman & Wildaksky, 1973).

Given the importance assigned to crime and its control, knowing the circumstances under which the SSP proves effective or ineffective was seen as more essential than simply knowing the program's outcome. If the SSP proved effective and we understand how it was implemented, replication or expansion of the program is made easier. If the SSP showed little or no impact on reducing recidivism and we understand how it was implemented, then informed decisions can be made on what is needed to improve the program, or to eliminate it.

The importance of the second focus area related to the ultimate goal of the SSP. The concept of recidivism was defined in multiple terms, e.g., absconding from parole, their presence or absence, but also in terms of types and degrees of new crimes.

In the third major area of concern, an attempt was made to answer the question of whether the addition of agency resources for supervising VFOs proved more cost-effective than supervision of these parolees without the added resources. This area was particularly relevant, given the State's scarce resources and the intra- and inter-agency interests that compete for dollars.

## Chapter 2

### RESULTS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS

#### CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

January 1978	The Division of Parole was re-established as a separate agency from the Department of Correctional Services.
May 1978	Governor Carey made a press release, announcing his "crime package" to reduce violent crimes and provide swifter punishment to offenders. A part of this program called for a 2.9 million dollar intensified parole supervision program for violent felons (Executive Chamber Press Release, May 17).
May 1978	Division of Parole began discussions with the Governor's Office and the Division of Budget on the parole supervision program and budget requirements. These discussions centered around revisions of the program plan and budget, and continued until July of 1979.
July 1978	New York State Legislature enacted Violent Felony Offense Law and appropriated funds for criminal justice agencies. (Chapter 481 of New York State Laws of 1978.)
September 1978	VFO Law took effect.
February 1979	Division of Parole received budget approval to hire 100 parole officers for the VFO program.
March 1979	Parole began recruiting parole officers to supervise VFO parolees and to work as Classification Officers.
April 1979	Official start date of VFO program. Parolees began entering program.
April 1979	Parole began hiring parole officers to supervise VFO parolees and to conduct parolee classifications.
June 1979	Developmental work began in establishing computerized Parole Registrant System with the Division of Criminal Justice Services.
July 1979	Staff for the program's Absconder Search Unit was approved by Budget; hiring began.
August 1979	Staff for the program's Central Monitoring Unit was approved by Budget; hiring began.
March 1980	Program was still not fully staffed (i.e., the ASU and CMU).

As the chronology of events above indicates, implementation of the SSP was delayed. The Division of Parole was five months into the program year, before start-up work for the program was completed, and in some cases even before this work had begun. The specifics of the program's implementation process are discussed next. Because of the volume of detail involved in the implementation, only key areas are highlighted.

#### Analysis of SSP Implementation

##### Program

In May 1978, the Division of Parole was contacted by the Governor's Office about developing an intensified supervision program for VFOs. The Parole staff subsequently began developing a program proposal.

The key elements of the final program design included: a) classification of parolees to expedite parole officer initial case review and planning; b) caseload size of 35 parolees per officer; c) six parole officer contacts with a parolee each month for the first six months of supervision, followed by a graduated reduction in contacts; d) use of a specialized unit of parole officers to apprehend absconders from supervision; e) a computer interface with DCJS to facilitate flow of intelligence information about delinquent parolees and issuance of parole warrants; and f) a central monitoring unit of parole officers to monitor program operations and provide technical assistance.

The program was constructed based on Parole's experience in supervising parolees and the Governor's concern about maintaining tighter surveillance of all VFO parolees. There was no time to pre-test the program.

The proposed program plan was submitted to the Division of Budget in the summer of 1978 for budgetary review and approval. The plan called for the supervision of about 10,000 parolees statewide who were A, B or C felons. The cost for supervising 10,000 parolees under the SSP was seen by Budget as exceeding the 2.9 million dollar appropriation. As such, the plan had to be revised.

The revision work was, however, stymied throughout the summer, because of delays in the Legislature approving the state's supplemental budget for 1978-79 which affected the size of Parole's budget for fiscal year 1979-80, when the VFO program was to begin.

After several meetings with Budget, it was finally agreed in January 1979 that Parole would initially supervise 3500 VFOs newly released to parole beginning in April 1979. The decision that the program would be prospective rather than retroactive was made because of the limited funds available and the logistics that would have been involved in re-shifting 10,000 parolees with varying lengths on parole to a special supervision program.

#### SSP Objectives and Standards

The programmatic aim of the SSP to reduce recidivism among VFO parolees was made explicit in the program design. The program's operational procedures and standards were prepared and communicated to staff (Appendix I).

Initially, there was some confusion among parole officers as to the aim of the SSP. Some viewed the program as strictly a toughened law enforcement effort to crack down on VFO recidivism, while others saw the program as having a dual focus: enhanced law enforcement and parolee rehabilitation. More on this later, under the heading "Disposition of Parole Officers."

##### Program Resources

In February 1979, the Division of Budget approved the expenditure of funds for 100 parole officers to supervise and classify parolees. The parole officers were phased in gradually as the caseloads increased. This process was completed in December 1979.

While funds were made available to hire supervision parole officers by the start of the program, expenditure approval for the Absconder Search and Central Monitoring Units were not given until July and August 1979, respectively. However, these units were still not fully staffed by March 1980. Moreover, the ASU still lacked budgetary clearance to obtain the cars and hand radios necessary in apprehending parolee absconders.

The delays in Parole receiving budgetary sign-offs caused the program's components to be implemented in an uncoordinated manner.

There were no funds allocated to Parole for the computerized Parole Registrant. Funds were instead given to DCJS.

##### Agency Communication and Program Enforcement

Communications between Parole, the Governor's Office and Budget were already discussed.

The other outside agency which played a key role in the implementation of the SSP was the Division of Criminal Justice Services. DCJS orchestrated and provided resources for implementing the Parole Registrant System. There were serious communication problems between Parole and DCJS which greatly delayed the development and installation of the computer system.

All parole officers assigned a VFO caseload heard about the SSP before it started, through other parole officers or staff announcements. Officers initially assigned to the SSP were given an orientation as to the program's procedures. In depth training specific to the program was not provided. A training program could not be mounted in time for staff recruits, i.e., by April 1979 - the program start date. All SS officers, however, had been trained in basic parole supervision procedures which is required for all parole officers.

Parole's central headquarters instituted procedures for area offices reporting on VFO cases. Case conferences between a parole officer and his/her senior were instituted to review parolee status.

With limited staff initially approved for the CMU, the initial activities of the unit centered on a) reviewing randomly selected case files to insure that parolee contact standards were being met; and b) planning for a re-distribution of caseloads in the New York City Area in an effort to better coordinate the VFO caseload activity and accountability.

#### Characteristics of the Division of Parole

Parole is a relatively small agency. It has an annual budget of about 21 million dollars, and employs approximately 600 parole officers and 350 support personnel statewide. The agency supervises roughly 19,000 parolees (including those from other states living in New York) and services another 20,000 inmates in prison who are given a Parole Board hearing and prepared for release to the community. The average size caseload under community supervision is 50 parolees per parole-officer. Some carry more than 50, depending on location and personnel deficits.

When implementation work began on the SSP, Parole had been in existence as a separate agency for only 16 months. The agency was still in a state of transition from being a part of the Department of Correctional Services. Administrative structure and management procedures were being revised. Field supervision manuals were being re-developed. An agency MIS was being developed which began with a federal grant received in November 1979. The fact that the MIS was not in place prior to the start of SSP, caused many delays in gearing up for processing of program parolee movement and other data.

Paralleling these agency start-up activities, Parole also initiated in 1977-78 modifications in its parolee violation process.<sup>3</sup> The agency began using hearing officers to assist the Parole Board in conducting local violation hearings. The hearing officers are experienced attorneys, who were case supervising parole officers at one time. The agency, also, instituted a parole violation control center in New York City to establish hearing schedules, adjournments, monitor and centrally record the flow and outcome of the hearings, etc. These and other changes in the violation hearings procedures were still in-process during 1979-80.

<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to the Morrissey decision of the Supreme Court (408 U.S. 471), all paroling authorities were mandated to institute a parolee violation hearing process to ensure due rights of parolees. For a description of the Division's violation hearing process, see The Parole Revocation Process, Volume 3, 1978-79 Annual Statistical Report, New York State Division of Parole.

The simultaneous innovation of the SSP and modifications in the violation hearing process, with their additions to paper work, led to parole officer criticism and resistance to providing timely reports or parolee status and movement.<sup>4</sup> This state of affairs impacted negatively on the installation of the agency's MIS and the SSP evaluation effort.

#### Disposition of Parole Officers

All parole officers assigned to supervise VFO parolee caseloads were selected on the basis of having at least 2 years experience in field supervision.

The attitudes of the parole officers towards the special program are best represented by the results of a survey taken during a program review session held in New York City in July 1980. A member of the research staff was present to record staff feedback. Forty-five parole officers participated. They had collectively supervised 1,575 VFO parolees during the first year of the SSP. The results to follow were extracted from all of the survey responses.

According to Field Supervision procedure, a releasee is assigned to the SSP based on whether his/her crime of conviction was for a violent felony offense. Do you agree with this?

Most of the POs felt that there should be more criteria used to determine whether or not a parolee should be assigned to the Special Supervision caseload, e.g., prior criminal record, involvement with organized crime.

When were you first told by your supervisor about the program?

All of the POs heard about the program before it started.

Did you volunteer for a SS caseload?

Most of the POs were selected. There were some volunteers, but most of them admitted that they volunteered because they would have been recruited anyway.

Were you given an orientation or training for the Program?

They were given an orientation, but no specific training for the program, i.e., beyond the basic supervision training all parole officers do receive. The officers assigned to SS cases did receive the procedures for SSP.

<sup>4</sup>Collier, W. V. Employees of the Division of Parole: How They Perceive and Evaluate the Agency, New York State Division of Parole, 1979.

The goal of the SSP is to better protect the community by preventing criminal behavior by "violent felony parolees" through maintaining close surveillance of these parolees and providing them with rehabilitation assistance. Do you agree?

There was a complete consensus of agreement with the stated goal of SSP. However, some parole officers felt that a greater degree of enforcement of parole conditions was key.

#### Implementation Performance

By the time the SSP was launched on April 2, 1979, only parts of the overall program were in place. Delays in the allocation of funds for the program represented a major factor. In addition, there were other factors. No time was allowed to pre-test the new program for validity of its content which precluded an opportunity to train parole officers in what was to be expected of them in supervising VFOs. Moreover, the fact that Parole was engaged in adding new agency administrative procedures at the time the SSP was introduced further complicated the implementation of the new program.

It was within this context that the SSP began. The evaluation findings on the program's outcome are presented next, following the chapter on the Parole computer inter-face with the Division of Criminal Justice Services.

### CHAPTER 3

#### CASE SUPERVISION AND ABSCONDER SEARCH

During the year ending March 31, 1980, a total of 2,939 VFO inmates were released to parole from state correctional facilities. An additional 661 were also placed in the SSP at the beginning to start SS caseloads (Phase II). These latter parolees were convicted of a violent felony offense. Total intake of SS cases for the year was, thus, 3,600.

The mean monthly number of new SS cases was 245. Of the overall releases to parole, one out of every three was a violent felony offender. This was also true for 1978, i.e., approximately one third of all releases were convicted of a violent felony.

#### Parolee Background

The median age of the new SS cases was 27.3 years. Males comprised 97.0%. Hispanics constituted 19.5%, whites 23.0% and blacks 57.5%.

Table 7

#### Generic Categories of Violent Offenses Committed By SSP Parolees and Average Prison Term Served

OFFENSE*	(Class)	Ranked by Frequency Of Occurrence Among Group	Mean Time (Mths) In Prison**
Robbery	(B, C)	1st (highest)	37
Manslaughter	(B)	2nd	43
Assault	(C, D)	3rd	28
Rape	(B)	4th	41
Sodomy/Sexual Abuse	(B, D)	5th	33
Burglary	(B)	6th	32
Murder	(A)	7th	83
Possession of Weapon	(C)	8th	22
Kidnapping	(B)	9th	40
Arson	(B)	10th	40

\* Offenses are grouped generically, i.e., 1st and 2nd degree and attempts are combined into an offense category.

\*\* Jail time prior to transfer to a state facility is not included in prison time served. The mean times are generally representative, because of sizeable variations among individual offenders.



Two-thirds of the SS parolees had no or little prior criminal history. Based on the Parole Board guidelines, the average prior criminal history score for this group was 1.8 on a 10-point scale.<sup>5</sup> Even though, their prior criminal history score was low, the addition of their current offense would have increased this average score significantly (i.e., because of prior parolee terms, parole violations as well as new offense convictions).

Finally, in terms of the social problems exhibited by the parolees: 12% were homeless upon release from prison; 62% completed less than twelfth grade; 80% were unskilled laborers, 54% had not secured a definite job upon release; and 61% had a history of drug or alcohol use.<sup>6</sup>

Based on the overall background profile, the socio-economic needs of these VFOs seemed as critical as their manifested criminality. This particular observation supported the program's aim to not only supervise these parolees more closely, but also to provide them with intensive rehabilitative assistance.

#### PROGRAM CENSUS AS OF END OF YEAR (3/31/80)

The total number of VFO parolees who were still under supervision at the end of the first year was 3,396. This figure was 2.9% less than the expected 3,500.

Table 8

#### Parolees In The SSP By End of First Year

	PHASE I	PHASE II	ABSCOND.	OTHER DEL.
<b>NEW YORK AREA</b>				
MANHATTAN-NORTH	153	108	5	20
MANHATTAN-SOUTH	206	66	20	12
BROOKLYN-NORTH	119	96	5	35
BROOKLYN-SOUTH	147	101	8	26
BROOKLYN-QUEENS	102	77	3	17
QUEENS	131	78	10	32
BRONX I	123	126	9	34
BRONX II	123	88	7	18
BRONX III	113	84	5	24
WARRANT BUREAU	0	0	471 *	0
NEW YORK AREA TOTALS	1,217	824	543	219
ALBANY	39	22	1	5
BUFFALO	58	30	2	9
ROCHESTER	49	42	5	8
SYRACUSE	48	11	2	8
CANTON	7	1	0	0
ELMIRA	15	9	0	2
POUGHKEEPSIE	52	32	0	8
HEMPSTEAD	88	23	3	15
TOTAL (3,396)	1,573	994	556	273

\* These absconder cases included 386 long-term absconders.

<sup>5</sup>Prior criminal history is a composite score based on points assigned to number of prior misdemeanor convictions, felony convictions, prior parole/probation terms, parole/probation revocations, etc.

<sup>6</sup>These results were based on analysis done of parolee needs assessments in the New York City Area. Upstate areas did not have a classification unit.

#### Average SS Caseload Size

Towards the end of the year, the average active caseload size was:

Average Phase I	19.74
Average Phase II	15.38
Average Active Total	35.12

While the average total caseload was consistent with 35:1 ratio, there were some cases where individual parole officers were carrying 10 to 15 cases above the 35 limit, e.g., Bronx Area Office. This disproportionate caseload distribution seemed to have been a result of an overall caseload (SS and non-SS) disparity among parole officers in the New York City area. In addressing this problem, the agency executed a plan to reorganize all caseloads.

The parole officers surveyed had some comments on caseload size:

#### BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE SO FAR IN SUPERVISING SS PAROLEES, DO YOU THINK A TOTAL CASELOAD OF 35 IS MANAGEABLE BY A PAROLE OFFICER?

In most cases the response to this question was yes. However, some POs felt that 35 is a high number due to 2-5 parolees who are delinquent, and must be carried through the violation process, which is time consuming and prevents an officer from devoting full attention to his/her active cases.

#### HAS YOUR TOTAL ACTIVE SS CASELOAD EVER EXCEEDED 35 PAROLEES?

In some cases, the response was yes. For example, parole officers in the Bronx Area were carrying an average of 49 cases; all carried at least 40 cases. In the Queens Area, the average caseload of SS cases was 39.4.

To follow are answers to the specific focus questions posed by the evaluation in assessing the case supervision and absconder search components of the SSP.

#### DID THE PAROLE OFFICERS MAKE THE STIPULATED NUMBER OF CONTACTS WITH PAROLEES; THEIR FAMILIES AND EMPLOYERS?

The monthly average number of parolee contacts made are displayed in Table 8 below. The results were based on case reviews done on 300 randomly selected releasees to the SSP during the program's first six months.

Table 8

Analysis of Parolee Contacts During First  
and Sixth Month of Program As Compared With  
Minimum Contact Standards for SSP

Type of Contact	Minimum Monthly Contact Standard For Phase I of SSP (First Six Months)	Monthly Average Case Contact (Releasees to SSP IN)*	
		(Month 1)	(Month 6)
Home Visit/Community Surveillance	2*	1.6 (NYC)	1.2
		2.6 (UNYS)	1.6
Office Contact	4**	4.4 (NYC)	3.5
		5.8 (UNYS)	2.2
Other Visits (e.g., Employer)	1	1.0 (NYC)	1.0
		1.5 (UNYS)	1.0
Telephone Contacts	(Variable)	1.6 (NYC)	1.0
		1.0 (UNYS)	1.7

\* Minimum was 1 home visit per month in upstate rural areas where a parole officer had to travel more than 40 miles to parolee's home.

\*\* Minimum was 1 office contact per month in upstate rural areas.

There were several points underscored by the results in Table 8.

First, the parole officers made on the average less field visits than the standard set for the program. The most frequent contacts with parolees were made at a parole office.

Some additional feedback on the field visits came from the parole officer survey. While most parole officers agreed with the appropriateness of the field contact standard, generally they were not always able to make these visits (see further below). Thus, it appeared that either the program was not enforcing its standards and/or the standards were unrealistic, given the responsibilities of the parole officers.

Second, the changes in the average contacts between the first and sixth months of the program seemed to support the notion that parole officers may have maintained greater contact with parolees in the beginning of the program; and they subsequently reduced the frequency of these contacts, as they got a better feel for actual contact needs.

And third, the average case contacts for upstate generally changed in the same direction as that of New York City during the six month period. However, the difference in magnitude between the average contact averages of the New York City and upstate were biased in that there were significantly fewer parolees included in the upstate sample.

Finally, to follow is some feedback from parole officers on the case contacts:

IN YOUR OPINION, HAVE THE EXTRA OFFICE CONTACTS MANDATED FOR  
SS CASES BEEN VALUABLE IN MAINTAINING CLOSE SUPERVISION?

Most of the POs felt that the mandated office visits were a positive part of the program. Many felt, however, that the second weekly office visit should be at the discretion of the PO. Often instead of the second visit, the parolee reported, e.g., to the Employment Bureau which was permissible by the program.

IN YOUR OPINION, HAVE THE EXTRA FIELD CONTACTS MANDATED FOR SS  
CASES BEEN VALUABLE IN MAINTAINING CLOSE SUPERVISION?

Most of the POs felt that the extra monthly field visits were appropriate. The consensus of opinion was that these were "good." In the Bronx Office many times the two visits were not being done, due to excessive caseloads. In other offices a comment of a Senior was that his staff "tried hard" to make these visits whenever possible. POs by and large felt that they belong in the field and that these visits were part of their necessary function.

Finally, some POs felt that seeing a parolee very frequently diluted the interaction. Another interesting response was that the extra office visit for an unemployed parolee sometimes pushed the parolee to seek employment. There was a great deal of difference during these meetings in regard to "contacts," however. But more POs responded positively to the question of whether or not the additional contacts helped them to know their client better and foster more rapport.

TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE FINALIZED TREATMENT PLANS FOLLOWED  
BY THE PAROLEES AND PAROLE OFFICERS?

This focus question could not be answered during the study period, due to the lack of sufficient data. Parole Officers did not uniformly submit treatment plans and follow-up reports to the research unit. The former form indicates what services would be provided to a parolee in the areas of housing, employment, substance abuse counseling, etc. Information on the latter form pertains to how much progress a parolee makes in regard to the rehabilitation objectives.

Parole officers resisted using the forms because they viewed it strictly as "research tools" that are extraneous to supervision work, and unnecessarily added to their existing paper work. The evaluation staff disagreed with this argument. The parole officers were only asked to complete an initial parole plan form on each parolee and a follow-up form every six months. Both forms are in check-off format, so as to facilitate their completion. Attempts were made to explain to the parole officers that the forms were necessary for the evaluation of the new program and that the information requested on the forms was not readily available from any other source. The regular parole officer chronological supervision progress reports could not be used as a source due to the fact that they are completed on an untimely basis.

This situation exemplified the classical conflict between the interests of evaluation and that of service procedures in most organizations. In any case, the evaluation staff will attempt to gain greater cooperation from line staff in completing the parole plan and follow-up reports. And to the extent possible, retrieving the parolee progress information using an alternative approach will, also, be considered.

TO WHAT EXTENT WAS UDE MADE OF THE ABSCONDER SEARCH UNIT?  
HOW MANY ABSCONDERS WERE APPREHENDED?

Utilization

During eight months from August 1979 to March 1980, 749 parolee absconder cases were referred to the ASU for apprehension.<sup>7</sup> Of this total, 93 were SS cases, 430 were long-term VFO absconders who were paroled prior to the SSP, and 226 long-term non-VFO absconders. This last group consisted of individuals convicted of a non-violent offense, but were known to have a history of violent behavior.

The ASU in New York City was assigned an average of 93 cases per month. It was questionable as to whether this was a fair caseload for the six officers, who had been in the Unit for only part of the eight-month period. There was supposed to be a total of nine officers in the New York City area. The missing three were not hired until the end of the first program year.

Case Closure Rate

Based on the total number of VFO cases assigned to the ASU, 37.5% or about 1 out of 3 absconders were apprehended within one to eight months. On the basis of the total number of new SS cases referred to the ASU, 73.1% or 3 out of 4 absconders were apprehended within the same time period. Overall, the monthly average number of cases closed was 24.5.<sup>8</sup> Of all the cases, half were closed directly by the ASU officers and the other half by other law enforcement agents working with the ASU or alone.

<sup>7</sup> As previously noted, the ASU did not begin to be operational until July 1979. Statistical reporting of case referrals began in August 1979. Also, absconder cases referred to the ASU do not represent all parolee absconders for the study period. See section on program impact.

<sup>8</sup> No statistical comparisons were attempted between case closure rates for 1979 versus previously. This decision was made because data from periods preceding 1979 were not readily available. A comparative analysis will be done next year.

Table 9

Parolee Absconder Cases Assigned to the Absconder  
Search Unit During August 1979 to March 1980

Cases Assigned	Number	Cases Number	Closed Percent
Special Supervision	93	68	73.1%
Long-Term VFO (pre-SSP)	430	128	29.8%
TOTAL	523	196	37.5%

Chapter 4

PAROLEE OUTCOME OF SPECIAL SUPERVISION PROGRAM

The outcome of the SSP was assessed by comparing the successes and failures of program parolees (1979) against parolees convicted of a violent felony and released to parole in 1978.

The two parolee groups were first compared on the basis of selected background variables that might have biased the outcome results in favor of one group or the other: age; race; released to parole by the Parole Board or conditionally released by law; time served in prison; and specific crime of conviction. The sole purpose of this comparative analysis was to establish whether the program and non-program groups were similar enough to draw valid conclusions about their differential success and recidivism rates.

The results showed that the two groups differed in terms of 1) age (program parolees were about two years younger; and 2) time served (mean prison months served by the program group was 30.5, and for the non-program group, it was 40.9). There were no significant differences between the two groups regarding the other background variables. The question was raised as to whether the two observed background differences between the SSP and non-SSP parolees actually affected parole outcome. The answer was mixed.

On the one hand, it could be assumed that the younger the offenders, the more likely they would recidivate. This would imply that the SSP group should show higher rates of recidivism than the non-SSP group. This outcome was not, however, observed. Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis reported below showed that age had no bearing on negative parole outcome.

The factor of time served in prison could be interpreted as either a positive or negative influence on parole outcome, i.e., the longer time served, the less likely recidivism (where a parolee is glad to be out finally and is determined to stay out); or the more likely recidivism (where a parolee spent so much time in prison, that he is unable to adjust to the outside and violates parole in some manner). While either of these alternatives may pertain more or less to individual cases, the results, again, of the multiple regression analysis showed that in the aggregate, time served in prison did not contribute much to explaining parole outcome.

Finally, the factor of release type was also shown by the regression results to have no significant impact on negative parole outcome.

HOW MANY PAROLEES WERE SUCCESSFUL UNDER THE SPECIAL SUPERVISION PROGRAM?

Of the SSP parolees selected for follow-up, 86.9% were successful or had remained on active supervision without incident of recidivism as of March 31, 1980. This success rate compared favorably with that for the comparison group of 1978 VFO parolees. The latter's success rate was 82.5%.

How the successful parolees of the SSP fared in terms of other indicators, e.g., obtaining steady employment or resolving personal problems, is currently under analysis. The results will be included in the second year evaluation report.

Table 10

Parolee Success Rate For the SSP (1979)  
Versus Success Rate of Parolees Supervised  
Prior to the SSP (1978)

Success Outcome	Non-SSP	SSP
Total VFO Releasees	1,732	1,905
Percentage of Successful Parolees	82.5%	86.9%
Number of Successful Parolees (non-recidivists)	1,431	1,655

A further analysis was done to assess whether the success rate for the SSP parolees actually differed from the success rate for the comparison group beyond a chance occurrence. The results of the analysis supported the superiority of the SSP approach ( $\chi^2 = 13.03, p = .0005$ ).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>  $\chi^2$  is the symbol for the Chi Square statistic, used to test significant differences between groups.



Program Enforcement of Conditions of Parole

Other than committing a new offense, a violation of the rules or conditions of parole in any major respect may lead to a parolee's return to prison by administrative action. Such action is referred to as a "technical violation," e.g., absconding, use of drugs, failure to get approval to leave the state, voluntarily fraternizing with known criminals. Rarely is a parolee returned to prison on the basis of a single rule violation. In most cases, violators violate several rules. The decision to return a technical violator is based on 1) the parole officer's evaluation of the case (i.e., parolee flagging or evidence that he/she may become reinvolved in crime); and 2) a formal violation hearing conducted by trained officers, unconnected with the case.<sup>12</sup>

Of the total SSP group (1,905), 74 or 4% were returned to prison because of technical violations. In slight contrast, 57 or 3% of the total non-SSP cases (1,732) were returned to prison for the same reasons. The proportion of technical violators from the two groups were too small to draw any conclusions about the technical violation rate under the new program.

WHAT WERE THE FACTORS RELATED TO THE LESS SUCCESSFUL PAROLEES IN THE PROGRAM?

Several parolee characteristics were analyzed in terms of their association with an unsuccessful supervision outcome (i.e., delinquency). The background variables included: parolee age; sex; race; prior criminal history score; time served in prison; whether released from prison by Board of Parole or conditional release; whether releasee was paroled to New York City or Upstate; and time on parole supervision prior to delinquency. The multiple regression statistical technique was used to test the association of these background factors with outcome.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>For a description of the hearing process, see The Parole Revocation Process. Vol. 3. 1978-79 Annual Report Series. New York State Division of Parole.

<sup>13</sup>Multiple regression is a complex technique for measuring inter-correlations of many variables as they impact on, or quantitatively contribute to an outcome measure.

Table 11  
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis  
of Delinquent Parolee Outcome (n = 3637)

Variable	Regression Coefficient	t-test	Significant
Time on Supervision	- .0536	18.96	YES (p = .001)
Type of Release	.0519	2.53	No
Area of Release	- .0073	2.00	No
Age	- .0011	1.44	No
Race	.0074	.93	No
Sex	- .0289	.73	No
Time in Prison	- .0001	.23	No
Prior Criminal History	.0000	.00	No
Multiple R = .469*      R <sup>2</sup> = 22% of variance results explained.**			

\* R refers to correlation of all parolee variables with outcome. Highest R value possible is 1.000.

\*\* R<sup>2</sup> refers to percent of variance explained or factors accounted for in outcome. Maximum value of R<sup>2</sup> = 100%.

The results displayed in Table 11 above shows that only the variable of time on supervision proved to have a significant impact on delinquency. That is, the less time on parole supervision, the more likely a parolee would recidivate. To put it another way, parolee delinquencies appeared to occur during the early months of release to parole. This was corroborated by other outcome results, which showed that delinquencies occurred on the average of 1.8 months after release from prison for SSP group and 2.7 months for the comparison group.

Also of note in Table 11 is that prior criminal history showed no bearing on parole outcome. Ordinarily, such a finding would be surprising. However, because of the little or no prior criminal history among the SS cases to begin with, the regression results on the PCH variable could not have been otherwise.

The above parolee background factors used in the regression analysis were selected on an exploratory basis. Taken together, the correlation of these factors with parole outcome was .469. Although this R of .469 was statistically significant ( $p = .001$ ), it only explained 22% of the variance (or factors contributing to the outcome). It, therefore, became evident that other factors, in addition to time on supervision, could better explain outcome of VFOs on parole.

The specific identification of these "missing factors" was not completely clear. However, the research staff strongly suspected that variables related to the circumstances of a parolee's life situation and supervision probably exert a greater impact on outcome than the parolee's background. For instance, a parolee's ability to get a job, his/her family situation, availability of a parole officer or other person to talk with about problems, or the availability of specific services may influence how a parolee succeeds under supervision in the community.

In any event, this area will be investigated during the second evaluation period. An attempt will, also, be made to interview parolees as to their reasons for violating parole. With a combination of objective and subjective feedback, it is hoped that the subsequent research will produce more usable findings.

#### WHAT WERE THE RATES, TYPES AND DEGREES OF RECIDIVISM EXHIBITED BY THE PAROLEES?

Answers to this focus question were based on further comparative analysis of the delinquents from the 1979 and 1978 groups.

#### Rates of Types of Recidivism

Table 12

#### Rates of New Offense Convictions and Absconding From Parole - 1979 (SSP) versus 1978 (non-SSP)

Recidivism Measures	Non-SSP	SSP
Total VFO Release Group	1,732	1,905
Percentage of New Offense Convictions of All Releasees	2.59% (n = 45)	1.84% (n = 35)
Percentage of Active Absconders of All Releasees as of 3/31*	5.02% (n = 87)	3.41% (n = 65)

\* These new convictions led to a return to prison.

\*\* This group refers to unapprehended parole absconders carried on active caseloads, i.e., not yet referred to the ASU.

The new crimes committed by the re-conviction cases from the program and comparison groups are displayed in Table 13 below.

Table 13

#### New Offenses Committed By SSP Recidivists and Comparison Group

Re-Conviction Offense (Conviction Class)	Non-SSP	SSP
Robbery (B)	6	5
Rape (B)		2
Burglary (B, C)	2	0
Total VFO Convictions	8 (18%)	7 (20%)
Other Felonies (D, E)	6 (13%)	1 (3%)
Misdemeanors, Violations	31 (69%)	27 (77%)
TOTAL	45 (100%)	35 (100%)

As can be seen in the above Table 13, there was no real difference in re-conviction rates for violent felony offenses between the program and comparison groups. However, program parolees were proportionately more likely to commit less severe (or more misdemeanor offenses) than the comparisons.

It was difficult to relate this particular finding directly to the new supervision program. In addition to the intensity of parole supervision, there are probably many factors that may lead a parolee to commit or not commit a new crime, e.g., circumstances of parolee's life. Not to mention those factors associated with the commission of a specific offense, e.g., expected opportunity gain from offense on part of the offender, victim availability, victim vulnerability or resistance and so on.

Moreover, analyzing changes in severity between an original offense and a subsequent offense on the basis of crime of conviction would be equivalent to measuring an artificiality. Generally, conviction labels (A, B, C felony) are assigned as a result of plea bargaining, and do not necessarily reflect actual criminal behavior. The study had ready access to conviction data, but not actual criminal behavior data.

Actual criminal behavior and other factors would have to be quantified, weighted and tested for association with a given offense level before comparisons could be made between severity of original offense and recidivist offense. This, in itself, would constitute a separate research effort for which there was no time during the evaluation study period. A much larger sample of re-conviction cases would also, be necessary as a basis for generalizing the obtained results.

Table 14  
Summary of Parolee Status of SSP  
And Non-SSP Groups As of March 31, 1980

	Non-SSP		SSP	
Total Release Cases	1,732	(100.0%)	1,905	(100.0%)
Number of Successful Cases	1,431	(82.6%)	1,655	(86.9%)
a) Returned to Prison on New Offense Conviction	45	(2.6%)	35	(1.8%)
b) Returned to Prison on Technical Violation	57	(3.3%)	74	(4.0%)
c) In Absconder Status as of 3/31	87	(5.0%)	65	(3.4%)
d) Pending Violation/Court Hearing as of 3/31	112	(6.5%)	76	(3.9%)

## Chapter 5

### COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL SUPERVISION PROGRAM

The relative cost-effectiveness of the special supervision program was determined and compared with that of regular (non-SSP) supervision of parolees with violent felony convictions. The analysis was done, using the same 1979 SSP and 1978 comparison group samples that were employed in assessing the differential outcome (success/failure) rates.

#### WHAT WERE THE PER CAPITA PAROLEE COSTS OF THE SSP AND NON-SSP?

Program	Per Capita Cost	(X)	Parolees	=	Total Cost
SSP:	\$1,366		1,905		\$2,602,230
Non-SSP:	\$1,259		1,732		\$2,180,588

The higher per capita cost for the SSP was mainly due to the higher costs for reduced caseload size of 35:1. Caseload size for the non-SSP was 50:1.

The cost for 1978 (non-SSP) was adjusted for an inflation increase, in order to make the 1979 and 1978 cost figures commensurate for comparison in the present. See end of chapter for actual cost calculations and assumptions.

#### WHAT WAS THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SSP AS COMPARED WITH NON-SSP?

Effectiveness was defined in terms of number of parolees who were successful under supervision, and evaluated in terms of cost saved for the non-reincarceration of these individuals. Annual per capita cost for incarceration was calculated as \$14,166. See calculations at end of chapter.

Program	Costs Averted	Number of Successful Parolees	% of Successful Parolees of Total Group
SSP:	\$23,444,730	1,655	86.9%
Non-SSP:	\$20,271,546	1,431	82.5%

Even though the cost for the SSP was higher than the non-SSP, the former saved the State over 3 million dollars more that would otherwise have been spent for reincarceration of recidivists. It must be kept in mind that this 3 million dollar savings is an underestimate of the SSP's return on investment, since the calculations were based only on a sample of parolees used in the evaluation.

Moreover, if one were to add to the SSP's return factor some hidden savings or other benefits, the effectiveness value of the SSP would have been even greater. These additions include, costs saved pre-incarceration processing (e.g., arrest, adjudication, jail detention); welfare support costs for unemployed parolees or their families; and tax revenues paid by employed parolees (Banks & Rardin, 1978). Unfortunately, these type data were not available during the course of the evaluation study. A special effort will be made during the second evaluation cycle to obtain and include at least some of these other cost-saving factors in the measurement of the SSP's cost-effectiveness.

# Calculations

## Cost of Supervision With SSP (1979-80)

1. \$22,863,740 (total 1979-80 agency direct and indirect costs)\*
2. 16,739 (average within-state parolee population, 1979-80)
3. \$1,366 (average per capita cost for parolee supervision)
4. \$2,602,230 (per capita cost X 1,905 parolees in SSP group)

## Cost-Savings

5. \$14,166 (annual 1978-79 per capita cost for incarceration = \$13,621\*\*, adjusted for 4% inflation rate; 1978 inflation = 10% and 1979 = 14%).\*\*\*
6. \$23,444,730 (\$14,166 X 1,655 successful parolees, who were not reincarcerated)

---

\* Costs represent actual expenditures as of end of fiscal year and were obtained from Parole's Finance Office.

\*\* The per capita annual cost figure used is an average cost of maximum and medium security New York State prisons. This was used because 1) parolee failures are returned to maximum and medium security facilities rather than, e.g., camp facilities; and 2) the wide variation in costs among the former facilities. Source of data: McDonald, D. The Price of Punishment: Public Spending for Corrections In New York. Colorado: Westview Press, 1980, p. 22.

\*\*\* Inflation rates are approximates for the two years. The inflation rate did not begin to accelerate rapidly to its present level of 18% until after the first quarter of 1980.



Cost of Supervision Without SSP (1978-79)

1. \$19,296,181 (total 1978-79 agency direct and indirect costs).
2. \$20,068,028 (total cost adjusted for a 4% increase in inflation from 1978-79 to 1979-80).
3. 15,935 (average within-state parolee population 1978-79)
4. \$1,259 (average per capita cost).
5. \$2,180,588 (per capita cost X 1,732 parolees not in SSP)

Cost-Savings

6. \$14,166 (annual 1978-79 per capita cost for incarceration = \$13,621, adjusted for 4% inflation rate).
7. \$20,271,546 (\$14,166 X 1,431 successful parolees, who were not reincarcerated).

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above evaluation findings, Parole's special supervision program showed a good deal of promise as an effective approach for supervising "violent felony offenders." Despite the many problems encountered in implementation, the program achieved success in reaching its objectives. A viable classification system to assess the relative risk and needs of parolees in the program was established. There was less recidivism among parolees in the SSP than among the comparison group of parolees under supervision prior to the SSP. The specialized absconder search unit of the SSP was able to apprehend 3 out of 4 absconders from new releases to the program. And in terms of cost-effectiveness, the SSP saved the State a significant amount of money that otherwise would have been spent on reincarceration of recidivists.

These general conclusions are based on what must be considered a formative evaluation. That is, the program was in-process-of-implementation when the evaluation was done. Since the program was not stabilized or de-bugged, the evaluation results can only be taken as tentative. Any definitive conclusions about the program can only be drawn from subsequent evaluations. There still remain some questions that were not answered by the initial evaluation. For instance, Is it the increased parolee contacts or reduced caseload size, or enhanced rehabilitation support that leads to higher success rates? Is it some combination of these program components? Or, do social and economic circumstances of releasees to parole impact more on parole outcome of the special supervision program? Such questions will be addressed in the subsequent evaluations of the program.

While the SSP's outcome was generally favorable, there were some weaknesses in the process of the program. First, the standards for field contacts with parolees were not met by the parole officers. Given that the increased contacts represent a key element of the new program, this area should be addressed by the management of field supervision (see specific recommendation below).

Second, the number of parolees on a SS caseload exceeded in several instances the 35 maximum. Closer monitoring of caseloads needs to be instituted. Since the writing of this report, field services management has instituted a procedure to guard against excessive SS cases per officer, and to monitor the length of parolee stay on a SS caseload.

And third, the VFO conviction criterion for intake into the SSP was limited. The evaluation results on the backgrounds of the program parolees tended to show that the socio-economic needs of these offenders were as critical as their manifested criminality. While no direct causative relationship between socio-economics and criminality is being posited here, what is underscored is that the rehabilitative needs be taken into account in deciding on whether to place a parolee under special supervision (see other recommended criteria below).

The operational problems of the program have been identified, and Parole has begun corrective measures. Based on the evaluation feedback, to follow are some specific recommendations:

- . Other criteria should be added to crime of conviction in considering whether a parolee should be placed under special supervision:  
a) actual criminal behavior underlying a VFO conviction; b) prior criminal history of assaultive behavior; and c) parolee need for intensified rehabilitation assistance. These added criteria will permit Parole to place cases under special supervision who may represent a higher risk to community safety than indicated by simply crime of conviction.
- .. The classification process ought to begin while an offender is in the prison pre-release phase, so as to include the participation of the offender and to offer the field supervision parole officer more useful information in initiating an individualized supervision plan.
- . The standards for intensified parolee contacts should be made more flexible. Parole Officers and their Seniors should be allowed to set the actual number of parolee contacts based on the relative risk and supervision progress of the individual. Specific guidelines should be established for deviations from minimum contact standards, including direct accountability of the Parole Officer and Senior for making contact decisions below minimum standards.
- . Parole Officers carrying special supervision cases need to be oriented as to the agency's SSP philosophy, and provided training as needed in the specialized supervision of high need and high risk cases.  
  
Area Supervisors and Senior Parole Officers with responsibilities for SS caseloads need to be trained or in some cases re-trained in administrative case management and monitoring.
- . The Division should investigate further the apparent time consuming nature of the parole violation process as it impacts on Parole Officer time for supervision of active cases. The 90-day process of initiating and closing a violation case may be too long and the policy regarding number and length of violation hearing adjournments may have to be reconsidered in view of the amount of time they take.

It is anticipated that pursuit of these recommendations should result in an improved special supervision program. The recommendations, moreover, may prove to have a spill-over effect in improving the overall supervision capability of the Division.

Ongoing monitoring of the SSP's operations will continue to be carried out by field services management and the Central Monitoring Unit, so as to ensure proper functioning of the program and to correct problems as they emerge.

There is one final recommendation which did not flow from the evaluation, but does have significance for the SSP. Parole should consider participating on an inter-agency committee or task force that would propose a more integrated service delivery approach for high risk/need cases. Committee members would represent, e.g., the Department of Correctional Services, Division of Probation, Division of Alcoholism, Division of Substance Abuse Services, Division for Youth and the Department of Social Services. Parolees and/or their families are impacted on by most or all of these agencies. High risk/need cases could benefit greatly from a formalized coordinated effort among these agencies. For instance, parole supervision of such cases would be facilitated by having continuity of rehabilitation services between DOCS or DFY and Parole; or timely family welfare support from DSS would help in situations where a newly released inmate to parole may not be able to find employment initially.

This particular recommendation may be quite radical and may meet with resistance on the part of some agency heads. But, it is an idea whose time has come. No one agency, including Parole, can be expected to service all of the needs of its clients in carrying out an agency's particular objective. While there are occasions where two agencies do cooperate in joint projects, these projects are usually of a narrow scope, focusing on categorical problems, like substance abuse treatment for offenders. A more comprehensive approach to offender services would stand a greater chance of ensuring parolee success or perhaps even better general efficiency in inter-agency service delivery for the offender population.

**END**