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SMART Offenders

During the last 5 years the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) for the District of Columbia has not only created a smooth-running probation and parole operation, it also has developed an innovative new information system that continuously evolves and serves as a model for agencies around the country.

Formed from two overburdened municipal agencies in August 2000, CSOSA faced the challenge of providing pretrial services for the Federal and local courts of the District of Columbia, as well as managing 15,000-plus adult District of Columbia offenders on probation, parole, and supervised release. CSOSA also assumed control of both agencies' information systems.

In response, CSOSA developed the Supervision and Management Automated Record Tracking (SMART) system, reflecting its plan to use research-driven programming and best practices from the field to build a model community corrections agency.

According to Thomas H. Williams, associate director for community supervision services, SMART is a Web-based case management and information retrieval system custom-designed to meet agency needs. SMART provides tracking and monitoring capabilities not found in off-the-shelf community supervision applications.

Williams says that CSOSA uses SMART not only for day-to-day operations and case management, but also for measuring overall agency performance and tracking historical data. Modules include intake, reports, offender demographics, replication of drug testing results, detailed supervision information, and tracking capabilities for treatment, community service, employment, and education. Additional features include electronic signature and workflow and limited access for external users. The latter allows Washington, D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department to upload rearrest notifications; the D.C. Superior Court to receive notification of presentence investigations, review them online, and approve or reject them; treatment vendors to log offender attendance at treatment sessions; and the U.S. Parole Commission, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the U.S. Park Police, and the U.S. Marshals Service to have read-only access to offender data. The

system design also includes administrative function, user customization, and automatic notification capabilities. Its secure, easily navigable interface promotes a standard look and feel throughout and the design allows for the easy addition of new modules.

"CSOSA is continuously looking at innovative ways of enhancing its case management and information retrieval technology," Williams says. One such enhancement, he notes, is the recently created AUTO Screener. AUTO Screener is a state-of-the-art assessment tool available through the SMART system that determines the appropriate level of supervision for offenders and recommends treatment and support services to meet their needs.

"Good offender assessment is key to the case planning process," Williams says. "With funding from Congress, our agency has developed a tool to capture both the offender's risk level to reoffend and the offender's specific needs."

According to Williams, the initial AUTO Screener assessment is performed by a community supervision officer during a structured interview when an offender enters community supervision. The offender answers a series of questions about education level, functional literacy, employment, residence, social networking, and originating offense—a complete social, criminal, and functional history. Each question helps assess the offender's criminal risk level, recidivism probability, and supervision needs. Information is routinely updated every 6 months and when a major life event or rearrest occurs.

From the data obtained in the interview, AUTO Screener generates a prescriptive supervision plan, viewable by all staff, that contains support service recommendations to guide staff in the offender's re-entry process. Based on these recommendations, the supervision officer can readily determine an appropriate treatment and supervision plan. The offender signs the printed version of the completed plan and a contract specifying sanctions. AUTO Screener, however, allows an officer to override the suggested plan, with supervisor approval.

Benefits of AUTO Screener, Williams says, include—

- **Objective assessment and standardization.** By automatically generating an individualized plan, AUTO Screener helps community supervision officers ensure fair and appropriate treatment and supervision.

- **Risk-group classification.** The system automatically categorizes offenders based on their risk levels, identifying high-risk individuals who need specialized supervision. Managers can then direct additional resources to high-risk offenders and monitor their effectiveness.

- **Flexibility.** AUTO Screener allows users to customize existing screens and design new ones.

- **Historical data tracking.** AUTO Screener keeps a chronological record of information.

- **Ability to share information with other agencies.** Although CSOSA is a Federal agency bound by guidelines related to the Privacy Act, AUTO Screener data can be shared with CSOSA's criminal justice partners.

The AUTO Screener implementation brings other benefits to CSOSA, Williams adds, including paperwork reduction, secure access, and a user-friendly interface. It helps CSOSA standardize and improve offender assessment, ensuring quality treatment while providing services targeted to each offender.

Williams sums up the value of the new tool this way: "Through a combination of logic, rules, and formulas, AUTO Screener derives a total score and a list of prescriptive treatments and supervision recommendations. Supervision officers can quickly determine the appropriate treatment and supervision level for each offender. AUTO Screener allows quantitative intelligence to provide quality supervision and treatment services better, faster, and more accurately."

AUTO Screener, along with the other advanced technologies used in its parent SMART system, can be applied to offender-based case management in other criminal justice agencies and easily customized to fit particular needs. For more information, contact Leonard Sipes, senior public affairs specialist at the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia, 202–220–5616 or Leonard. Sipes@csosa.gov. For general information about the agency, visit www.csosa.gov.