



RESEARCH FINDINGS

GROUP REPORTING PROJECT

**NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION**

By
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Program Research Analyst

Presented to
Judges of the Circuit Court of Lake County

James K. Booras, Chief Judge
July 7, 2009

RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE
19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT – DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION
LAKE COUNTY GROUP REPORTING PROJECT

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19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT – DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION
LAKE COUNTY GROUP REPORTING PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court of Lake County has long enjoyed a national reputation for providing services and programs that represent the highest quality of justice administration. The court is committed to its mission of achieving a fair and accessible system of justice to the public, ensuring that all persons who are served by the judicial system are treated in a fair, expeditious, and reasonable manner. In order to promote public trust and confidence in the judicial system, the Lake County Circuit Court is dedicated as an organization to deliver court services and programming that are consistent with the highest standards and principles of justice performance:

- *Access to Justice: Courts and the justice, programs and services they deliver should be accessible and perceived by the public as reasonable, fair and affordable.*
- *Expedition and Timeliness: The public should have confidence that the basic court functions (e.g., case processing, compliance with schedules & court orders, implementation of law and procedure) are being conducted expeditiously and fairly.*
- *Equality, Fairness and Integrity: Courts should provide diligence, due process and equal protection of the law to all who are served by them, and their decisions and orders should have integrity.*
- *Independence and Accountability: The court and its operations should be independent - not unduly influenced by, but in cooperation with, other components of government; and accountable for its use of resources.*

The *Strategic Plan of Lake County* (2008) also identifies the area of Criminal Justice as one of four of its strategic initiatives to be addressed over the next several years. Within this area, recidivism programs, alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders, and targeted goals for improvements of the probation system were considered to be the most important issues. Among the action strategies designed to improve the level of performance of the probation system are:

- Develop strategies that target individuals who can be best served through participation in community-based programs.
- Develop the tools and information necessary to assist criminal justice professionals throughout the County to efficiently and effectively fulfill their responsibilities.
- Establish and expand programs and procedures that emphasize the appropriate treatment and monitoring of offenders in the community.

- Develop a model that outlines a continuum of interventions that will assist all components of the Lake County Criminal Justice System in maximizing opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community.
- Expand offender access to competent and effective services.

The 19th Judicial Circuit’s Division of Adult Probation Services supports the mission and core values of the court organization by providing the highest quality services to the courts and to the community of Lake County. In pursuit of this mission, the Adult Probation Division attempts to increase the efficiency and economic delivery of community-based services, while assuring public safety, maintaining offender accountability, and effecting positive change. In attainment of this goal, the Adult Probation Division strives to achieve a number of strategic initiatives as outlined in the 19th Judicial Circuit Court’s *Strategic Plan (2009)*:

- To reduce offender recidivism through the provision of effective programming based on evidence-based principles and best-practices.
- Providing a balanced response to offender behavior by applying swift and certain incentives and sanctions, as appropriate, with the intention of increasing offender motivation for pro-social behavior.
- Offer probation services at branch court locations and other sites throughout Lake County in order to increase compliance with court-ordered conditions of supervision and control the collateral cost of services to probationers in terms of time, money, and convenience.
- Hire employees with multiple language skills in order to facilitate the needs of a more diversified client population.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with other private and public agencies throughout Lake County in order to maximize the services available to probationers.

The primary role of the Division of Adult Probation Services is to assist offenders in reducing the incidence and seriousness of further crime committed in the community. As such, the division is mandated by the 19th Judicial Circuit Court with the responsibility of appropriately supervising a variety of criminal offenders sentenced and/or residing within Lake County. The expectations associated with this role have become complicated as caseloads have expanded and the number of higher-risk probationers has increased among the various offender types supervised by the division over the past several decades. The resources available to the division in terms of funding for staff positions, community-based treatment programs, and information-management systems, however, have not kept pace with the ever-growing needs for personnel, technology, and offender services. In order to effectively manage the limited resources allocated to contemporary community corrections agencies, it is no longer possible to rely entirely on traditional programming and methods. Programs, services, and surveillance techniques must be proven to be both efficient and effective in the results that they deliver in order to be of real value.

The Division of Adult Probation Service's Group Reporting Project is an offender monitoring program that provides an alternative to the traditional, individual face-to-face reporting requirements for lower-risk offenders. The Group Reporting Project is designed to allow large groups of probationers (approximately 25 – 50 participants per session) to report at various sites strategically located throughout Lake County, where informational presentations are provided and standardized reporting forms are collected. Offenders attend once-monthly group reporting sessions, or once-quarterly for the lowest-risk offender groups. Group reporting sessions are typically 45 – 60 minutes in duration, which includes a brief life-skills presentation. Group reporting sessions are facilitated by Lake County probation staff in collaboration with the Judicial Services Division of the College of Lake County and trained volunteers from the community. In addition to these, private service agencies from Lake County also participate in providing educational life-skills presentations to probationers. Probationers also have the opportunity for one-to-one coaching and assistance provided by community volunteers.

The goals developed around the Lake County Group Reporting Project are compatible with the values and strategic objectives of the 19th Judicial Circuit Court and the Division of Adult Probation Services, as well as those outlined by the Lake County strategic plan:

- To maximize the existing resources of the Division of Adult Probation by facilitating large groups of probationers to report at one time, in one place, and with minimum staff time.
- To fully utilize services within the community, including trained volunteers and community educational resources.
- To provide meaningful information and self-help skills to probationers.
- To reduce the population pressures on the main Adult Probation Services building.

Based on the current number of available group reporting sites (seven at six locations) and active groups (approximately 26 per month), as well as the results obtained through several recent client surveys (2003 & 2009) and a brief cost analysis (2009), the Group Reporting Project is making a great deal of progress in meeting its stated program goals and fulfilling the strategic outcomes anticipated by the 19th Judicial Circuit and the Lake County Board. Among the highlighted outcomes associated with the Group Reporting Project include:

- The Group Reporting Project yields an estimated annual net savings of \$231,183 (FY 2009 budget figure) in operating costs. This figure is based on comparisons of supervising the current Group Reporting caseload of 834 probationers through traditional individual meeting requirements at the probation office. These savings also include the utilization of a bi-lingual Group Reporting probation officer, without whom interpreter services would be required to meet service needs of 155 Spanish-speaking Group Reporting participants.

- Approximately 80 trained volunteers from the community have participated in the Group Reporting Project since its inception in 2002. Continued recruitment is facilitated by the College of Lake County – Division of Court Services Volunteer Coordinator. Lake County Adult Probation staff, CLC faculty, and community social service agencies have shared responsibility in providing life-skills presentations for Group Reporting sessions.
- Life-skills presentations are included at each Group Reporting session (including Spanish-speaking groups) and address such topics as: Physical Health, Substance Use, Employment/Education, Anger/Stress Management, Interpersonal Relationships, Cognitive Self-Change, and Building Safer Communities. Approximately 97.5% of English-speaking and 100% of Spanish-speaking probationers surveyed in 2003 rated the information that they received in the presentations as either *Very Meaningful/Very Helpful* or *Meaningful/Helpful*.
- Group Reporting sites are conveniently located throughout Lake County: CLC-Grayslake, CLC-Vernon Hills, North Branch Court-Round Lake, Park City Branch Court, and Zion Police Department, in addition to the Adult Probation Services Building in Waukegan.
- The strategic positioning of sites throughout the county, the short (30 – 60 minutes) monthly (or quarterly) meeting requirements, the availability of make-up sessions, and no-cost-to-client programming associated with the Group Reporting Project provides both cost- and time-savings benefits to probationers, as well as increases the opportunities and likelihood for compliance with the court-ordered conditions of probation supervision.

The Group Reporting Project presents itself as an extremely efficient method of managing lower-risk offenders placed on probation supervision, especially in terms of court and client cost-savings. In order to further prove the performance value of the Group Reporting Project, it is necessary to demonstrate that it is also an effective program. In this regard, the expectations of the program were modest; it was hypothesized that probationers assigned to the group reporting condition would be no more likely to recidivate than probationers traditionally managed through individual meetings with their probation officer. Recidivism in this study was measured as: 1) negative termination from probation supervision, 2) first offense resulting in re-arrest, and 3) first offense resulting in re-conviction.

This study tracked the recidivism outcomes of 125 Group Reporting Probationers (60 low-risk and 65 medium-risk) assigned to probation in the first 12 months of the Group Reporting Project with a matched comparison group of 125 probationers who completed their probation terms within the 12 months preceding the beginning of the Group Reporting Project. Groups were matched one-to-one, or as closely as possible, in terms of risk level, gender, age, length of supervision, severity of current offense, and prior correctional supervision. Study participants were tracked during the duration of their respective probation terms (up to 72 months) and study participants remaining in the

community following termination from probation (122 from each group, or 97.6% of the original sample) were tracked for an additional 36 months post-probation follow-up.

The following charts present study outcomes in terms of percent failure for each of the groups and an examination of risk level as a confounding variable. Each table also includes an estimation of effect size, indicated as a correlation (r) between the treatment condition (independent variable) and the recidivism outcome (dependent variable). The magnitude of effect sizes range from + 1.0 to - 1.0. Generally, the magnitude of effect sizes ranges from small ($r \approx +/- 0.1$) to medium ($r \approx +/- 0.3$) to large ($r \approx +/- 0.5$). In the context of the present study, positive (+) effect sizes indicate that the outcome favors the Group Reporting condition. An alpha level of .05 (p) was used as a significance level for all statistical tests.

Any differences among participants in terms of their termination status at the completion of Probation Supervision were considered non-significant, though the overall effect size did favor the Group Reporting condition. Group Reporting participants had an overall successful probation termination rate slightly better than that of the Comparison Group (94.4% compared to 89.6%). This difference is completely attributable to differences among medium-risk cases. Despite the lack of any statistically significant differences between the groups, however, the results of this analysis are considered positive in terms of program effectiveness. Not only was the null-hypothesis (our goal, in this case) supported, but there was a small effect in favor of the group reporting condition.

Completion of Probation Supervision			
Termination Status from Probation Supervision			
Case Type (n per group)	Percent Negative Termination		Effect Size (r); Significance (p)
	Comparison Group	Group Reporting	
Low-Risk Cases (60)	0%	0%	N/A
Medium-Risk Cases (65)	20.0%	10.8%	$r = + 0.128$; $p = .147$
All Cases (125)	10.4%	5.6%	$r = + 0.089$; $p = .162$

The results concerning recidivism while on probation supervision were likewise favorable towards the group reporting condition, though not all results were statistically significant. There appears to be a trend toward a reduced number of future criminal offenses while on probation among those who participated in Group Reporting. Differences between the Group Reporting Group and the Comparison Group were evident not only in the percentage of first arrests (12.8% for Group Reporters compared to 23.2% for Comparisons: a statistically significant difference, representing a reduction of almost 45%), but also in the percentage of new convictions (9.6% for Group Reporters compared to 17.6% for Comparisons, though this result is not statistically significant). The effects are even more dramatic for medium-risk offenders, who are more likely than low-risk offenders to be arrested (and subsequently convicted) during probation supervision.

Recidivism during Probation Supervision			
First Offense Resulting in Re-Arrest during Probation Supervision			
Case Type (n per group)	Percent Recidivism		Effect Size (<i>r</i>), Significance (<i>p</i>)
	Comparison Group	Group Reporting	
Low-Risk Cases (60)	16.7%	11.7%	<i>r</i> = + 0.071; <i>p</i> = .432
Medium-Risk Cases (65)	29.2%	13.9%	<i>r</i> = + 0.187; <i>p</i> < .05
All Cases (125)	23.2%	12.8%	<i>r</i> = + 0.134; <i>p</i> < .05

First Offense Resulting in Re-Conviction during Probation Supervision			
Case Type (n per group)	Percent Recidivism		Effect Size (<i>r</i>), Significance (<i>p</i>)
	Comparison Group	Group Reporting	
Low-Risk Cases (60)	13.3%	10.0%	<i>r</i> = + 0.055; <i>p</i> = .573
Medium-Risk Cases (65)	21.5%	9.2%	<i>r</i> = + 0.170; <i>p</i> = .052
All Cases (125)	17.6%	9.6%	<i>r</i> = + 0.118; <i>p</i> = .065

This investigation also provides compelling evidence that low- and medium-risk Group Reporting participants do not recidivate as quickly as similar, traditionally supervised offenders while in the community following termination from probation supervision. These results indicated that traditionally supervised low- and medium-risk probationers recidivate (as measured by re-arrest) at nearly identical rates within three years of termination from probation (35.6% and 39.7%, respectively). Group Reporters, however, were re-arrested significantly less during the first three years after probation. Low-risk Group Reporters demonstrated a significant reduction in recidivism as measured by both re-arrests (10.2%, a 72% reduction compared to the low-risk Comparison group) and re-conviction (6.8%, a 78% reduction compared to the low-risk Comparison Group). Medium-risk Group Reporters also recidivated less than the medium-risk Comparison group participants; though not statistically significant, their re-arrest rate was less than that of comparisons (27.0% compared to 39.7%); and their re-conviction rate was significantly less than that of the Comparison group (17.5% compared to 31.8%).

Recidivism after Probation Supervision			
First Offense Resulting in Arrest 36 Months following Termination from Probation Supervision			
Case Type (n per group)	Percent Recidivism		Effect Size (<i>r</i>), Significance (<i>p</i>)
	Comparison Group	Group Reporting	
Low-Risk Cases (59)	35.6%	10.2%	<i>r</i> = + 0.303; <i>p</i> < .001
Medium-Risk Cases (63)	39.7%	27.0%	<i>r</i> = + 0.134; <i>p</i> = .131
All Cases (122)	37.7%	18.9%	<i>r</i> = + 0.210; <i>p</i> < .001

First Offense Resulting in Conviction 36 Mos. following Termination from Probation Supervision			
Case Type (n per group)	Percent Recidivism		Effect Size (<i>r</i>), Significance (<i>p</i>)
	Comparison Group	Group Reporting	
Low-Risk Cases (59)	30.5%	6.8%	<i>r</i> = + 0.305; <i>p</i> < .001
Medium-Risk Cases (63)	38.1%	17.5%	<i>r</i> = + 0.230; <i>p</i> < .01
All Cases (122)	34.4%	12.3%	<i>r</i> = + 0.261; <i>p</i> < .001

The results obtained from this analysis of the Group Reporting Project provide compelling evidence that Group Reporting is a supervision strategy that is not only effective in terms of its impact on offenders' success during supervision, but that it is also a very cost-efficient means of supervising low- and medium-risk offenders in the community. Reallocating precious staff time and department resources, otherwise spent supervising these lower-risk offenders, into programs and supervision for higher-risk offenders can result in lower recidivism rates among all classes of offenders. Even small effects in reducing recidivism can have very large practical implications. Committing a new criminal offense while on probation supervision, especially that of a Felony or Class A Misdemeanor offense, may result in revocation and incarceration at either the county or state level. If new offense rates can be impacted by the provision of services at the community level, the potential cost-savings could easily be in the millions of dollars.

In conclusion, Group Reporting appears to be of greater benefit to offenders than originally anticipated. The initial expectation was that Group Reporting would be no less harmful to lower-risk offenders than traditional reporting requirements. The findings presented here, however, suggest that Group Reporting performs better in terms of overall successful completion of probation and reduced recidivism than traditional reporting. In addition, these benefits are more pronounced for medium-risk offenders than low-risk offenders, the latter of which perform well regardless of the reporting condition. Based on these findings, two recommendations for the future direction of the Group Reporting Project emerge:

- Shifting the focus of Group Reporting towards medium- and even higher-risk offenders may result in bigger payoffs in terms of both offender outcomes and improved resource management.
- Lower-risk offenders may, in fact, prove to do just as well in the community with an even less restrictive mode of supervision. Based on existing evidence-based practices, caseload banking appears a viable option for low-risk probationers, especially for very low risk cases.

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19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT – DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION
LAKE COUNTY GROUP REPORTING PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court of Lake County has long enjoyed a national reputation for providing services and programs that represent the highest quality of justice administration. The court is committed to its mission of achieving a fair and accessible system of justice to the public, ensuring that all persons who are served by the judicial system are treated in a fair, expeditious, and reasonable manner. In order to promote public trust and confidence in the judicial system, the Lake County Circuit Court is dedicated as an organization to deliver court services and programming that is consistent with the highest standards and principles of justice performance:

- Access to Justice:
 - *All proceedings and other public business are conducted openly.*
 - *The court facilities are considered safe, accessible and convenient to use.*
 - *Judicial proceedings and court services and programs allow the opportunity for effective participation, without undue hardship or inconvenience.*
 - *All court personnel shall be courteous and responsive to the public and accord respect to all with whom they come into contact.*
 - *The costs of access to court services – whether measured in terms of money, time, or procedures that must be followed – shall be reasonable, fair, and affordable.*
- Expedition and Timeliness:
 - *The entire court system establishes and complies with recognized guidelines for timely case processing, while at the same time keeping current with its incoming caseload.*
 - *The court system disburses funds promptly, provides reports and information according to required schedules, and responds to requests for information and other services on an established schedule that assures their effective use.*
 - *The Court promptly implements changes in law, procedures, and best-practices.*
- Equality, Fairness and Integrity:
 - *The court system adheres to relevant laws, procedural rules and established policies.*
 - *The court gives individual attention to cases, deciding them without undue disparity among like cases and upon relevant factors.*
 - *Decisions regarding cases within the court system address the issues presented and make clear how compliance can be achieved.*
 - *The court takes appropriate responsibility for the enforcement of its orders and assures that records of all relevant decisions and actions are accurate and properly preserved.*

- Independence and Accountability:
 - *The judicial system maintains its institutional integrity, yet properly observes the principle of comity in its inter-governmental relations.*
 - *The court is a responsible steward of the public resources that it oversees, and uses fair employment and management practices.*
 - *The court regularly informs stakeholders and justice partners of its programs and services.*
 - *The court, to the best of its ability, anticipates new conditions, emergent events, and evidence-based practices, and adjusts its operations as appropriate and necessary.*

In addition to these high standards, the *Strategic Plan of Lake County* (2008) also identifies the area of Criminal Justice as one of four of its strategic initiatives to be addressed over the next several years. Within this area, recidivism programs, alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders, and targeted goals for improvements of the probation system are considered to be the most important issues. Among the action strategies designed to improve the level of performance of the probation system are:

- Develop strategies that target individuals who can be best served through participation in community-based programs.
- Develop the tools and information necessary to assist criminal justice professionals throughout the County to efficiently and effectively fulfill their responsibilities:
 - Evaluate current County programs, develop the methods and tools to monitor program results, and share information on program results.
 - Research best-practices and programs that have demonstrated positive results in other criminal justice systems.
 - Provide periodic reports and presentations on national and local programs of significance that have demonstrated or produced positive results in the criminal justice system.
- Establish and expand programs and procedures that emphasize the appropriate treatment and monitoring of offenders in the community.
- Develop a model that outlines a continuum of interventions that will assist all components of the Lake County Criminal Justice System in maximizing opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community.
- Expand offender access to competent and effective services.

The 19th Judicial Circuit's Division of Adult Probation Services supports the mission and core values of the court organization by providing the highest quality services to the courts and to the community of Lake County, as well as to victims and adult offenders of crime. In pursuit of this mission, the Adult Probation Division attempts to increase the

efficiency and economic delivery of community-based services, while assuring public safety, maintaining offender accountability, and effecting positive change. In pursuit of this goal, the Adult Probation Division strives to achieve a number of strategic initiatives as outlined in the *19th Judicial Circuit Court's Strategic Plan* (2009):

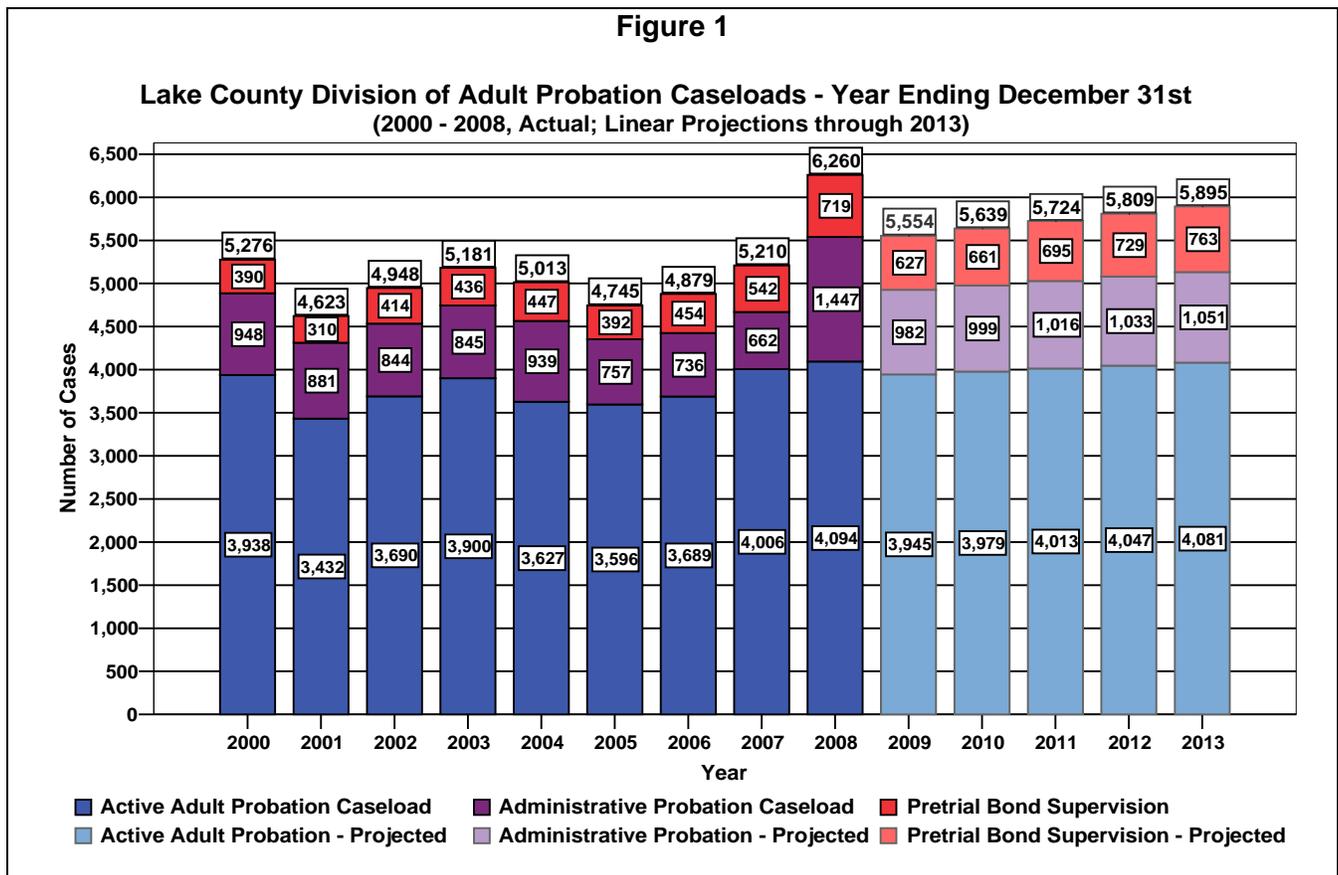
- To reduce offender recidivism through the provision of effective programming based on evidence-based principles and best-practices.
- Providing a balanced response to offender behavior by applying swift and certain incentives and sanctions, as appropriate, with the intention of increasing offender motivation for pro-social behavior.
- Offer probation services at branch court locations and other sites throughout Lake County in order to increase compliance with court-ordered conditions of supervision and control the collateral cost of services to probationers in terms of time, money, and convenience.
- Hire employees with multiple language skills in order to facilitate the needs of a more diversified client population.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with other private and public agencies throughout Lake County in order to maximize the services available to probationers.

The Division of Adult Probation Service's Group Reporting Project is an offender monitoring program that provides an alternative to the traditional, individual face-to-face reporting requirements for lower-risk offenders. The Group Reporting Project is designed to allow large groups of probationers (approximately 25 – 50 participants per session) to report at various sites strategically located throughout Lake County, where informational presentations are provided and standardized reporting forms are collected; probationers also have the opportunity for one-to-one coaching and assistance provided by community volunteers. The development of this program and its achievements, to date, are compatible with the values and strategic objectives of the 19th Judicial Circuit Court and the Division of Adult Probation Services, as well as those outlined by the Lake County strategic plan.

Background

In the United States, there are an increasing number of adults under correctional supervision. In 2007, over 7.3 million people were under some form of correctional supervision, including those incarcerated in jails and prisons, as well as those supervised in the community by parole and probation agencies (Glaze & Bonczar, 2009; West & Sabol, 2009). A recent report by the Pew Center on the States (2009) estimated that one in thirty-one adults (3.2% of the adult population) in the United States were either incarcerated or under some other form of correctional supervision. Sixty percent of these offenders were sentenced to probation supervision. In Illinois, one in thirty-eight adults is under correctional supervision; 59.1 percent of whom are supervised through local probation departments. This translates to approximately 1.6% of the entire adult population in Illinois being supervised by adult probation services.

At the end of 2008, the Adult Probation Division of the 19th Judicial Circuit in Lake County, Illinois had 4,094 adults under active probation supervision, 1,447 adults under administrative supervision, and an additional 719 adult defendants supervised by the Pretrial Unit. The total number of cases supervised by the Division of Adult Probation at that time represented 1.2% of the entire adult population of Lake County. Figure 1 (below) displays the growth of the Lake County Adult Probation population 2000 – 2008. Based on end-of-year statistics available since 2000, the linear trends predict expansion in each of the above-noted caseload types as indicated in Figure 1 through the year 2013.



The essential purpose of probation services is to assist in reducing the incidence and impact of further crime as committed by probationers in the community (American Probation and Parole Association, 2000). Probation departments attempt to achieve this purpose through the effective implementation of supervision strategies for those persons placed on probation. These strategies are designed to increase the likelihood of success as measured by probationers' compliance with court dispositions and future crime prevention. Nationwide, recidivism rates for offenders on probation supervision have consistently ranged between 30-60% (Beck & Shipley, 1989; Vito, Maahs & Holmes, 2006). The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (Adams, Olson & Adkins, 2002) reported that while on supervision 30% of Illinois probationers were re-arrested for another crime and almost 40% had at least one technical violation of their court orders; in addition, probation was revoked for approximately 15% of all probationers. An outcome evaluation of Lake County Adult Probation during that same period revealed similar outcomes for all

cases assigned to adult probation services (23.7%, 34.0%, and 15.5%, respectively). High-Risk cases (based on the Illinois Adult Investigation & Supervision Classification System - IAISCS), however, generally performed poorer than those cases classified as either Low- or Medium-Risk on various outcome measures assessing successful probation supervision (Kuzmickus,* 2000; see Table 1).

Table 1
Lake County Probation Outcomes – 2000

Table 1a: Successful Termination defined as:

- No new convictions or Petition to Revoke (PTR) filed for a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony offense.
- No court action taken for a technical Violation.
- Not closed on Warrant Status for a probation violation.

	Successful Termination	Unsuccessful Termination
All Probation Cases (n = 97)	41 (42.3%)	56 (57.7%)
Low – Medium Risk Cases (n = 53)	39 (73.6%)	14 (26.4%)
High Risk Cases (n = 44)	2 (4.5%)	42 (95.5%)

Table 1b: Successful Termination defined as:

- No new convictions or Petition to Revoke (PTR) filed for a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony offense.

	Successful Termination	Unsuccessful Termination
All Probation Cases (n = 97)	74 (76.3%)	23 (23.7%)
Low – Medium Risk Cases (n = 53)	45 (84.9%)	8 (15.1%)
High Risk Cases (n = 44)	29 (65.9%)	15 (34.1%)

Table 1c: Successful Termination defined as:

- No revocation to Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC).

	Successful Termination	Unsuccessful Termination
All Probation Cases (n = 97)	82 (84.5%)	15 (15.5%)
Low – Medium Risk Cases (n = 53)	53 (100%)	0 (0%)
High Risk Cases (n = 44)	29 (65.9%)	15 (34.1%)

Assessments, programs, services, and various surveillance techniques are among the tools most often employed by probation officers in their efforts to assist probationers to become more law-abiding. Over the past fifteen years, corrections research has identified a number of evidence-based practices that are associated with effective interventions (Bogue et al, 2004):

- Assessment of offender risk/need levels using actuarial instruments
- Enhance offender motivation
- Targeted interventions based on risk, need, and responsivity
- Provide skill training for staff and monitor their delivery of services
- Increase positive reinforcement
- Engage ongoing support in natural communities
- Provide measurement feedback

* 19th Judicial Circuit Employee

Tools of the Trade – Risk Assessment

The assessment of an offender's risk to reoffend is one of the most important tasks faced by those who work within judicial and correctional environments (Bonta & Wormith, 2008). This principle suggests that an offender's risk level should dictate the types of services he or she receives, the dosage needed, and the amount of supervision required in order to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Ideally, an offender's risk level should be determined by an actuarial risk and needs assessment that has been validated and normed on the target population. The earliest risk assessments were non-actuarial and generally involved a determination of risk that was based solely on professional judgment. This level of assessment, which is still used in many jurisdictions, has been demonstrated to be only 10% accurate in predicting serious re-offense (Borum, 1996). A second generation of risk assessments, utilizing an actuarial style of measure, demonstrated greater predictive accuracy, but consisted largely of static risk factors, such as age and criminal history, in determining the likelihood of re-offense. Static factors provide limited information and are impervious to change. Once an offender has a static risk factor, it always remains a risk factor. An example of such a static risk assessment instrument is the Illinois Adult Investigation & Supervision Classification System [Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC), 1996].

Third generation assessments, also referred to as risk-needs instruments, combine both static and dynamic factors in the determination of offender risk. Dynamic factors present as criminogenic characteristics (i.e., learned attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle choices) that make criminal conduct more likely. Detecting these factors aid in directing correctional staff towards what should be treated in order to reduce a particular offender's risk to reoffend. The Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R; Andrews & Bonta, 1995) is an example of a risk-needs instrument that has been employed widely throughout the field of corrections management. The LSI-R was originally developed for use with incarcerated offenders and has demonstrated reliable predictive ability of offender success in terms of institutional misconduct, correctional halfway house placement, parole outcomes, and recidivism one year following offenders' release from custody. Subsequent research with probationers has indicated that LSI-R scores can also reliably predict multiple measures of probationers' success including termination type (e.g., early versus regular termination) and any evidence of recidivism while on supervision. The instrument includes fifty- four (54) items that measure ten components of risk and need. Those criminogenic components measured by the LSI-R are:

- Criminal History
- Education & Employment
- Finance Management
- Family & Marital Relationships
- Residential Accommodations
- Leisure & Recreational Activities
- Companions
- Alcohol & Drug Problems
- Emotional & Personal Problems
- Attitudes and Orientation

Prior to 2004, risk assessment among probation departments throughout the state of Illinois, including Lake County, was conducted using the Illinois Adult Investigation & Supervision Classification System. In 2005, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) in cooperation with researchers for the University of Cincinnati embarked upon a validation study of the LSI-R within a limited number of pilot sites across the state, which included Lake County as a participating site. Among the findings of this research group (Lowenkamp, 2006; personal correspondence with C. Lowenkamp, January 2007) was that low-risk ratings on the Illinois Adult Investigation & Supervision Classification System (IAISCS) tool were strongly correlated with low scores on the LSI-R and that there was a moderate, but significant, correlation for moderate risk scores between the two instruments. As a result of this study, the LSI-R was adopted for statewide use in 2006, though the IAISCS would continue to be utilized as a screening tool; low-risk scores on the IAISCS would not require a full LSI-R assessment.

Tools of the Trade – Targeted Community-Based Interventions

Over the past several decades, there has also been increased attention on community-based offender rehabilitation as a tool designed to both curb prison overcrowding and improve access to effective treatment options available to offenders in their communities-of-origin. This emphasis, however, has created rising demands on local probation departments to adequately supervise and successfully treat an ever-growing number of, and often more serious types of, offenders within the community. The quality and efficacy of such programmatic approaches has been the subject of much research. In general, research findings have revealed programs that target three or less criminogenic needs do not produce significant reductions in recidivism, while those targeting a minimum of four and up to six needs can reduce recidivism by as much as 31 percent (Gendreau, French, & Taylor, 2002). Those programs that demonstrate the greatest success with offender populations tend to focus on social skills development, reduction of thinking errors, vocational training, misuse of leisure time, and substance abuse issues (Palmer, 1995). In particular, recent research suggests that programs containing a cognitive component and/or based on a cognitive-behavioral framework yield the best results in terms of decreasing pro-criminal attitudes and behavior and improving the deficient problem solving and social skills that are associated with continued criminal activity. A recent study of the Lake County Cognitive Outreach Groups (COG), for instance, revealed a 51% reduction in the rate of unsuccessful probation terminations and a 38% reduction in the rate of new arrests among probationers on active supervision following program completion (Verborg, 2008). In addition this study also suggested that cognitive-based programs can have a lasting impact, as evidenced by a 51% reduction in the rate of re-conviction three years following the termination of probation services.

This evidence, however, does not mean that all interventions which target an array of criminogenic needs are necessarily equally effective with all offender groups. Some studies have shown that lower risk offenders already come to supervision with a high probability of successful outcomes – without the addition of services or intense correctional

programming (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Currie, 1998). These offenders tend to have long-standing and positive social supports, fewer serious problems (e.g., substance abuse, mental illness, unstable work histories, homelessness, etc.), and demonstrate mostly prosocial behaviors (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005). Placing these offenders in correctional programs tends to disrupt their pro-social networks and increases their likelihood of recidivism.

The principle of providing targeted interventions based on offender risk has been aptly demonstrated in the correctional literature. Andrews and Bonta (2003), for example, found that structured correctional programs were much more effective when the program took in mostly higher risk offenders. Reductions in recidivism of 11% were noted in programs that targeted higher-risk offenders, as compared to 2% reductions among programs that took in both low- and high-risk offenders. Lowenkamp and Latessa (2002), likewise, demonstrated that community-based programming that was found to be extremely effective for high-risk offenders (30% or more reduction in recidivism) actually increased recidivism among lower-risk offenders (7% - 29% increase in recidivism). Lowenkamp and Latessa (2004) went on to offer several explanations for this increased failure among lower-risk offenders within programs that otherwise demonstrated effective outcomes:

1. Placing low-risk offenders in more intense correctional interventions exposes them to higher-risk offenders. Relationships that develop among offenders in mixed-risk groups tend to erode the pro-social supports and attitudes that contributed to those offenders being classified as low-risk.
2. Lower-risk offenders tend to have good jobs, good relationships with their families, and are invested in prosocial activities. Placing them in highly structured, long-term or restrictive programs can disrupt those factors that make them low risk.
3. Younger, naive, or lower functioning, low-risk offenders may be manipulated by more sophisticated, higher-risk, predatory offenders.

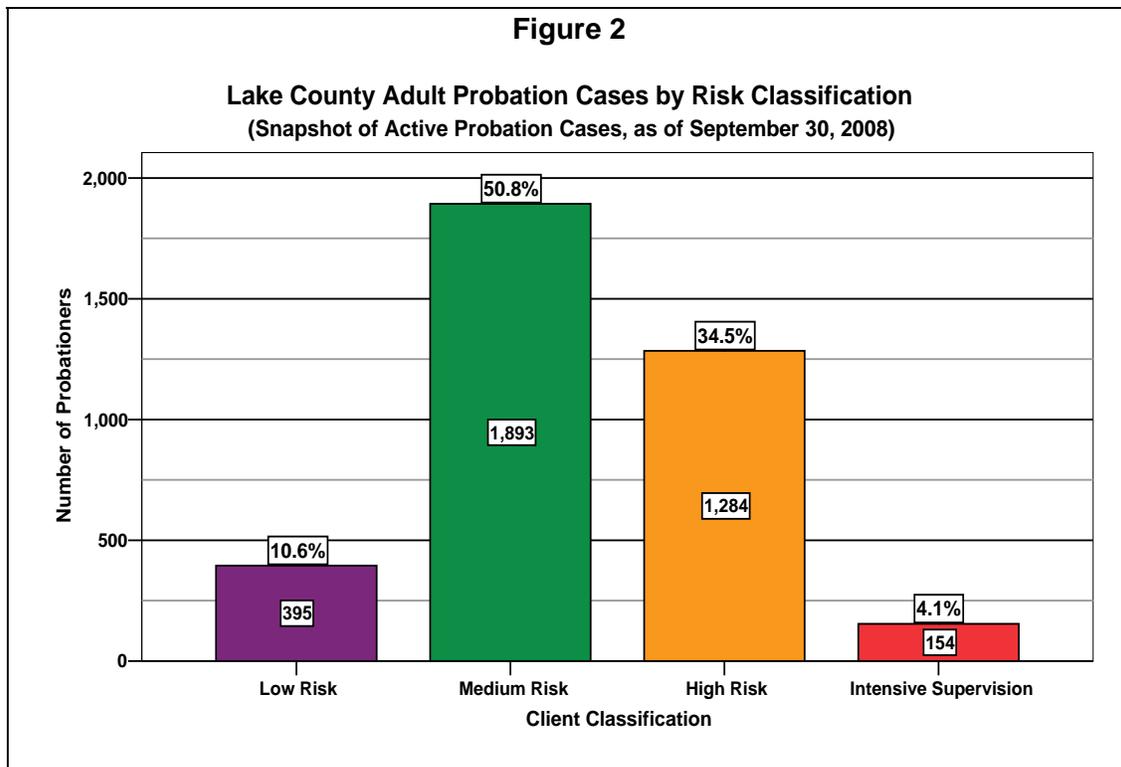
In an era of limited funding and resources, it is often necessary for correctional organizations to direct programs and services towards those offender groups that can potentially demonstrate the greatest percent decline in recidivism. Much of the correctional evaluation research to date, therefore, has focused on the impact of correctional programming on the recidivism rates for higher-risk offenders (e.g., Lake County COG Program – Verborg, 2008). Although it is important to emphasize this offender group, it is equally important to identify the amounts and types of treatment and correctional programming that might be beneficial, rather than harmful, to lower-risk offenders (Lowenkamp, Smith & Bechtel, 2007). As an example, although Lowenkamp and Latessa (2002) found that lower-risk offenders tended to be less successful than higher risk offenders when placed in intensive community-based programs, not all programming had a detrimental effect on lower-risk offenders' recidivism rates. A closer examination of the data revealed that those programs that provided same-gender programming and offered life-skills components in the areas of substance abuse,

employment skills, educational opportunities, cognitive skills training, financial management, and anger control did, in fact, have a positive impact on recidivism among lower-risk offenders.

As a general rule, correctional organizations are advised to make efforts to identify and exclude low-risk offenders from higher-end correctional interventions (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004). The development of both treatment programs and supervision techniques that are based on the risk level of the offender can assist low-risk offenders in maintaining those pro-social supports that contributed to their “low-risk,” rating. To date, however, no research study has analyzed the differences among low- and medium-risk offenders using an experimental design (Lane, Turner & Flores, 2004). What does exist in the field ranges widely from assertions that nothing should be done with low risk offenders, who can be safely transferred to administrative caseloads (CJI, 2004), to caseload banking methods, which provide minimal face-to-face supervision and compliance reviews (Johnson, Austin & Davies, 2002), to minimally intrusive life skills programs (Petersilia, 2007). The results of such efforts have been largely anecdotal or often inconclusive. At the very least, these interventions have demonstrated to be not harmful (in terms of increasing recidivism) to low-risk offenders while they are on supervision and that the time-saving measures of these approaches have allowed corrections staff to re-focus their energies and department resources on higher-risk offender populations (Soma, 1994). More rigorous examinations, however, have revealed that some of these approaches may actually be favorable to lower-risk offenders. Johnson et al (2002), in examination of caseload banking, for instance, reported that offenders on the casebank caseload did, in fact, perform better (e.g., lower recidivism rates and less serious new offenses) than other low-risk offenders on higher-intensity forms of supervision. Such evidence provides hope that there are indeed some strategies that can be of benefit lower-risk probations while on community supervision.

Lake County Group Reporting Project

Lake County Adult Probation is mandated by the court to supervise a wide variety of felons and other offenders that are residing in the community. The Division of Adult Probation has developed several programs that target higher-risk offenders (e.g., Cognitive Outreach Groups - COG; specialized caseloads for sexual offenders, domestic violence perpetrators, chronic DUI offenders; gender-specific programs; limit-setters, etc.). There is, however, another group of offenders on probation that are viewed as a lower risk to the safety of the community and are assessed as less likely to reoffend. This population is generally compliant with the court-ordered conditions of probation; they are more likely to complete any treatment that may be ordered; perform their court-ordered community service requirements; are more likely employed; and pay their restitution, court costs and fines. A recent census of the Lake County Division of Adult Probation active caseload indicates that approximately 61.4% of probationers can be classified as either low- or medium risk (see Figure 2).



The purpose of the present study is to evaluate the efficacy of a structured group reporting project developed specifically for low- and medium-risk probationers in Lake County, Illinois. Offenders participating in the Group Reporting Project are classified as either low- or medium-risk based assessments using the LSI-R (and/or IAISCS, prior to 2006). In addition, offenders placed in the Group Reporting Project also meet specific criteria developed over time by the General Field and DUI Units and are supervised using a the Group Reporting format. Offenders should be making regular payments (i.e., restitution, court fees, etc.) and any imposed public service hours or treatment programs should be in process. Eligible offenders are referred by their supervising probation officer and transferred to the caseload of a group reporting probation officer upon acceptance to the program. Efforts are made to divert eligible offenders into the Group Reporting Project as soon as possible upon intake to the Probation Department in order to minimize the amount of time spent under standard supervision and individual reporting requirements.

The Group Reporting Project is designed to allow large groups of probationers to report at various sites throughout Lake County where presentations are given and reporting forms are collected. Each group accommodates 25 – 50 probationers. Most offenders assigned to Group Reporting Project attend once-monthly group reporting sessions; the lowest-risk offender groups are required to attend only once-quarterly. Each group reporting session is typically 45 – 60 minutes in duration. Group Reporting is facilitated in collaboration with the Judicial Services Division of the College of Lake County (CLC) and trained volunteers from the community. The project utilizes Lake County Adult Probation officers, CLC educational staff, trained community volunteers and various outside agencies to present

educational programs to offenders, encourage an interest in continuing education, and prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of termination from probation services. Examples of the various life-skills topics addressed at Group Reporting sessions include financial management, substance use, domestic relations, dealing with anger, and stress management. (A list of general categories and topics are included in Appendix A.) Additionally, there are opportunities for one-on-one coaching and assistance provided by trained community volunteers. This format provides an opportunity for lower-risk offenders to receive educational resources and information that can be of benefit to them in their daily lives, while meeting minimum reporting requirements in accordance with their risk to the community. Probationers who are compliant with the group reporting requirements and complete the court-ordered conditions of their probation may be eligible for early termination from probation.

Group Reporting Project – Program Goals:

Group Reporting is an approach that has been utilized in other jurisdictions (e.g., Anoka, Blue Earth, Dakota, and Hennepin Counties in Minnesota; and Cook County, IL). Preliminary research with this form of supervision (Soma, 1994) has indicated that it is an appropriate labor-saving device for community corrections agencies. The Lake County Group Reporting Project, however, is unique to this model by incorporating not only a group reporting format, but also the addition of brief life skills presentations. In addition, group reporting sessions are facilitated not only by probation officers, but makes extensive use of the staff and facilities of the College of Lake County and trained community volunteers. Based on this unique approach, several program goals were established for the Group Reporting Project in Lake County:

- **Goal 1:** To maximize the existing Division of Adult Probation resources by facilitating large groups of probationers to report at one time, in one place, with minimum staff time.
 - **Progress:** Group Reporting Project sites can accommodate at least twenty-five and up to forty or fifty probationers at one time, in one place.

- **Goal 2:** To fully utilize services within the community, including trained volunteers and community educational resources.
 - **Progress:**
 - Approximately eighty trained volunteers from the community have participated in the Group Reporting Project since its inception in 2002. Continued recruitment is facilitated by the College of Lake County Volunteer Coordinator.
 - In addition to court and probation services facilities, several CLC campuses are used to facilitate groups.
 - Additionally, the program makes use of college faculty speakers, local agencies and video presentations.

- **Goal 3:** To provide meaningful information and self-help skills to probationers.
 - **Progress:**
 - Probation staff has presented information to the groups on the requirements of successfully completing probation and how to work towards the possibility of early termination.
 - Group presentations are also offered to a Spanish-speaking group through the use of Spanish-spoken presentations facilitated by a bi-lingual probation officer and bi-lingual volunteers.
 - CLC Traffic School has presented an educational video on road rage and facilitated a discussion afterwards.
 - Community volunteers speak with the Spanish-speaking group on cultural adaptation and improving their English-language skills.
 - Spanish-speaking probation staff provided presentations to the Spanish-speaking group on the importance of successful completion of probation, pursuing continuing education, and on being a positive role model for their children.

- **Goal 4:** To reduce the population pressures on the main Adult Probation Services building.
 - **Progress:**
 - Most probationers enrolled in the Group Reporting Project no longer report to the Adult Probation Services building for supervision, but utilize sites throughout the community.
 - To date, 10 sites in various locations throughout Lake County have been utilized to host Group Reporting sessions, including the following († denotes current Group Reporting Site, see Figure 3):
 - Adult Probation Building (Waukegan) †
 - CLC Grayslake Campus – Auditorium †
 - CLC Grayslake Campus – Building No. 3
 - CLC Grayslake Campus – Technical Building †
 - CLC Lakeshore Campus (Waukegan)
 - CLC South Lake Campus (Vernon Hills) †
 - North Branch Court (Round Lake) – Training Room A †
 - Park City Branch Court †
 - Zion Police Department †



- **Goal 5:** To instill an interest in probationers in continuing education through exposure to a college environment.
 - **Progress:**
 - A survey completed by 157 Group Reporting probationers (Brooks*, 2003; see Table 2) indicated that 55% expressed an interest in further education as a result of the Group Reporting. A number of Group Reporting probationers had also gone on to receive their degree or are currently attending CLC as students.
 - A similar survey for the Spanish-speaking group was also distributed at that time. Table 3 provides the English translation of the survey results for the initial eighteen Spanish-speaking group reporting probationers.

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Item		Positive Responses	Percent
1	Do you feel more comfortable reporting to the College of Lake County (CLC) or the Lake County Probation Department?	CLC	91.8%
2	Please rate the convenience of the campus site, taking into account the factors of travel time, parking, evening reporting hours, etc. as compared to the probation office.	Very Convenient or Convenient	83.6%
3	Before reporting to the College of Lake County campus for Group Reporting, had you had the opportunity to visit or attend a college campus?	Yes	74.4%
4	Being involved in Group Reporting at a college campus has made me think about furthering my education.	Yes	54.8%
5	Please rate the Group Reporting Project so far in terms of the value of the presentations and information received.	Very Meaningful or Meaningful	97.5%
6	Please rate how the Group Reporting Project has impacted your motivation to complete probation successfully.	Increased	79.1%
7	How has the experience of being involved with people who are volunteering their time to help you succeed made a difference to you?	I feel like people care	64.4%
		It helps to have more people to talk with	24.7%

Item		Positive Responses	Percent
1	Is it helpful to have a group in Spanish?	Yes	94.4%
2	Is it easier to report to the College of Lake County or the Probation Office?	CLC	89.4%
3	Before reporting to the college, had you visited or attended a college in the past?	Yes	11.1%
4	Please mark in terms of your experience the presentation and information from this group.	Very Helpful or Helpful	100%
5	Please mark if the group supervision has affected you to complete your probation conditions.	Increased	35.3%
6	Has the experience with the people that are volunteers helped you?	I feel they want to help me	51.9%
		It helps to talk with more people	33.3%

Group Reporting Project – Financial Impact:

In addition to those goals stated above, the Group Reporting Project also provides a cost-efficient method of supervising low- and medium-risk offenders in the community. A recent cost analysis of the program (Jumisko*, 2009) revealed a potential net savings of over \$230,000 compared to traditional face-to-face supervision with this population (see Table 4, below). The Group Reporting Project is largely supported through the College of Lake County's court services volunteer program. The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit's current agreement with CLC, which calls for a payment of \$69,769 this year, was signed in 2009 and expires on June 30, 2014. Under this agreement, the College recruits, trains and supervises the volunteers and maintains all volunteer records. While outsourcing these services has resulted

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in a more efficient use of volunteers, the true benefits of the group reporting program are better analyzed in terms of the use of probation officer time.

At this time, there are approximately 834 probationers (36.5% of all active probationers classified as either low- or medium-risk) participating in more than 20 Group Reporting groups of varying sizes. In addition to general offender groups, there are specialized groups for reckless driving offenders, women offenders, and Spanish-speaking offenders. Four probation officers and an assistant director manage the group reporting caseload by conducting risk assessments, performing records checks, and facilitating groups, among other duties. One or two probation officers facilitate each 30-60 minute group reporting session, where group sizes range from 10-12 up to 120. Approximately 26 groups are held each month.

While intake work and background checks would continue to take place regardless of whether or not the group reporting program existed, the ability to see multiple clients in a group setting is a source of significant cost-savings. Typically, probation officer caseloads in Lake County currently range from 80 to 100 cases; it is therefore projected that the 834 probationers currently in group reporting would require eight to ten probation officers to meet individually with these offenders under the traditional, face-to-face reporting requirements. Instead, these cases are being supervised by a unit consisting of four officers. Using FY2009 budget figures, the cost of adding one entry-level probation officer’s salary and benefits would be \$67,588; the cost to add four officers would be \$270,352.

Additional savings may be calculated by considering the needs of the Spanish-speaking group. Approximately 155 probations are currently assigned to this group. Assuming the Spanish-speaking officer that works with this group maintained a low-end, typical caseload of 80, there would still be 75 probationers that would be seen for a total of 18.75 hours a month (based on 15 minutes per case per month), or 225 hours a year. If another Spanish-speaking probation officer was not available, then the county would need to pay for the use of interpretation services. Spanish-speaking contract interpreters average \$20.42 an hour, while the language line costs up to \$136 an hour. Multiplying these rates by the additional 225 hours of services would result in additional costs ranging from \$4,595 to \$30,600.

No. Probationers in Group Reporting Unit	Probation Officers required with Group Reporting	Probation Officers required without Group Reporting	Estimated Cost-Savings
834	4	8	\$270,352
No. Probationers in Spanish Group Reporting	Interpreter Services required with Group Reporting	Interpreter Services required without Group Reporting	Estimated Savings
155	0 <i>(Services provided by one bilingual officer)</i>	\$4,595 to \$30,600	\$30,600
Total Costs Avoided			\$300,952
Less Program Cost			\$69,769
Net Savings			\$231,183

Group reporting, therefore, is a cost-efficient program, allowing probation officers to see large numbers of low- to medium-risk clients on a regular basis. While the agreement with CLC results in direct costs of \$69,769 this year, the program allows the county to avoid further costs ranging from \$270,352 to \$300,952. The final net savings is estimated to be over \$230,000.

Group Reporting Project – Collateral Impacts:

In addition to being a cost-efficient approach to supervision, the Group Reporting Project also provides indirect collateral, cost- and time-savings to clients. As noted in Figure 3 (above), Group Reporting sites are conveniently located throughout Lake County. These sites are located in large population areas that are easily accessible by public transportation. In addition, the 30-60 minute Group Reporting sessions are conducted different days of the week throughout the month with both day and evening hours to facilitate diverse work, school and lifestyle schedules of participants. Make-up sessions are also slated as part of the regular group reporting schedule. Considering clients' transportation costs and the time otherwise taken from work and life responsibilities, the flexibility of the group reporting framework is of considerable benefit to participants over the traditional supervision method of meeting one-on-one with a probation officer at the probation office. Under traditional reporting requirements, supervision meetings are often arranged on a schedule based on the caseload needs of the officer and the operating hours of the probation building rather than in consideration of the client's other life-responsibilities. The group reporting approach, therefore, allows low- and medium-risk clients to be adequately supervised within the community without serious disruption to their existing prosocial networks and lifestyle (Cala, Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005).

There is also some evidence that suggests clients find benefit in the information made available to them during the Group Reporting sessions. As previously noted, Petersilia (2007) advocates the use of minimally intrusive life-skills programming among lower-risk offenders. The Group Reporting Project offers various topics that fall under this broad heading of life skills (see Appendix A). Some of these presentations are very brief versions of longer term programs that higher-risk and/or higher-need offenders might receive as court-ordered conditions of their probation supervision (e.g., stress/anger management, substance use, COG), and others are meant to enhance the existing life skills of participants (e.g., healthy lifestyles, home and work relationships). The typical 30 minutes allotted for information sharing in each group reporting session is not intended to be, nor is a substitute for, traditional correctional treatment approaches. The intention of this portion of the sessions is only to think about the information provided and to process this within the context of their existing supportive systems within the community. As noted in the results of the 2003 Group Reporting Project Client Surveys (Tables 2 & 3), 97.5% of English-speaking clients and 100% of Spanish-speaking clients rated the value of the information they received in presentations as *Very Meaningful/Very Helpful* or *Meaningful/Helpful*.

The above-noted impacts of the Group Reporting Project are consistent with the values, goals and objectives of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court of Lake County as an organization, and the Division of Adult Probation Services as a direct provider responsible for the supervision and treatment of offenders residing in the community. Among the standards of the 19th Judicial Circuit (2009) outlined in its strategic plan are *access to justice* (including responsiveness to the needs of clients; and affordable client-costs in terms of time, money, and reasonable/fair procedures); *expedition and timeliness* (which includes the processing of cases throughout the entire court system in a timely, efficient and effective manner); *equality, fairness and integrity* (part of which emphasizes an individualized approach to assuring compliance with the orders of the court, as procedurally appropriate); and *independence and accountability* (which addresses the accountability for public resources, and the responsibility to change in response to evidence-based and best practices research). In terms of fulfilling these values, the Group Reporting Project is a model program for the 19th Judicial Circuit, and an example for programs throughout Lake County.

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METHODOLOGY

The Group Reporting Project has revealed itself to be an extremely efficient method of supervising low- and medium-risk offenders on probation supervision, especially in terms of court and client cost- efficiency. As noted in previous studies (Johnson et al, 2002; Soma, 1994), being able to efficiently manage lower-risk caseloads allows probation agencies to re-allocate staff time and resources on higher-risk cases, which seem to benefit well from more intense forms of programming – both in terms of treatment interventions and supervision techniques. The Group Reporting Project also strives to present itself as an effective program. In this regard, the goal for program was modest; in order to prove itself as an effective supervision strategy for low- and medium risk probationers, it was hypothesized that probationers assigned to group reporting would be no more likely to unsuccessfully complete their probation terms or recidivate than traditionally supervised offenders. The present study involved an examination of outcomes of Group Reporting participants with those of a matched comparison group on the following: successful completion of probation, new arrests and convictions during probation supervision, and new arrests and convictions for three years following discharge from probation supervision. This study is designed to provide evidence of this program’s efficacy, adding to the body of literature on effective programming for lower risk offenders, and adding to the knowledge base concerning “what works” in community supervision and corrections.

Research Procedure

Group Reporting Project participants are referred to the program either immediately at intake or sometime later during supervision by their probation officers in an effort to maintain the success of these probationers while on supervision. Group Reporting participants who meet the criteria for entry voluntarily agree to participation in the program and transfer to the caseload of a Group Reporting Project probation officer. Timely and successful completion of the imposed conditions of supervision, including the requirements of group reporting, may result in early termination from probation.

Since its inception in 2002, several thousand probationers have participated in Group Reporting sessions at various sites throughout Lake County. At the time the Group Reporting Project was developed and enacted, there was little forethought given to empirically measuring the effectiveness of the program through random assignment of participants into the program versus a control condition. For this reason, the current examination of the Group Reporting Project utilizes a quasi-experimental research design. An arduous one-to-one matching process (GSR, 2005) was employed with a group of Group Reporting participants, who had been assigned to the program during its first year, with a comparison group of probationers who had completed supervision in the twelve months prior to the program’s implementation. Morton (2009) indicated that successful one-to-one matching of key variables (both those

directly related and unrelated to the measured outcomes based on existing research) can result in reasonable certainty of internal validity.

Participant Characteristics

The Group Reporting and Comparison groups were matched on the basis of gender, race / ethnicity, age, supervision level (low-risk, medium-risk, according to the IAISCS), offense classification (various intensities of felonies and misdemeanors), and actual length of probation sentence. Table 5 below offers demographic characteristics of both groups. Participants were specifically matched in terms of gender and supervision level; age within five years; length of supervision within six months; and classification of offense within one degree of severity. In those few cases in which a race/ethnic match was unable to be made, an effort was made to distinguish between Caucasian and non-Caucasian participants. A post-hoc comparison was also done in regards to any prior correctional supervision; a dichotomous variable was then created which included: 1) those with any prior periods of probation and/or DOC incarceration, and 2) those who did not.

Table 5			
Probation Period Study - Demographic Characteristics of Cases			
Variables		Comparison Group (n = 125)	Group Reporting (n = 125)
Gender	Male	99 (79.2%)	99 (79.2%)
	Female	26 (20.8%)	26 (20.8%)
Ethnicity	Caucasian	81 (64.8%)	81 (64.8%)
	African-American	14 (11.2%)	11 (8.8%)
	Hispanic	30 (24.0%)	32 (25.6%)
	Missing	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)
Age at Start of Supervision	Mean	32.82 Years	33.35 Years
	Median	31.00 Years	32.83 Years
Supervision Level	Minimum	60 (48.0%)	60 (48.0%)
	Medium	65 (52.0%)	65 (52.0%)
Offense Type	Class 1 Felony	6 (4.8%)	6 (4.8%)
	Class 2 Felony	9 (7.2%)	10 (8.0%)
	Class 3 Felony	13 (10.4%)	9 (7.2%)
	Class 4 Felony	39 (31.2%)	44 (35.2%)
	Class A Misdemeanor	57 (45.6%)	54 (43.2%)
	Other Non-Felony	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.6%)
Actual Length of Supervision	Mean	21.22 Months	22.09 Months
	Median	22.00 Months	23.00 Months
Prior Correctional Supervision	No	79 (63.2%)	88 (70.4%)
	Yes	46 (36.8%)	37 (29.6%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant differences between groups on any of the above-noted variables. 			

In reviewing the post-probation offense behaviors of study participants, it was necessary to remove several of the participants from subsequent analysis due to death at the close of supervision or a long period of incarceration immediately following their respective probation terms. Inclusion of these participants in the subsequent study would

have given the false impression that they were successful following termination of probation services, when in fact they were not exposed to a risk for failure in the community. Table 6 indicates those cases that were removed from the subsequent analysis. Each of the effected cases removed were from the Group Reporting Condition; the corresponding matches from the Comparison Group were likewise removed to maintain the demographic integrity of the groups. The resulting demographic characteristics for the post-probation phase of this study are presented in Table 7. There were no significant differences noted between groups, with the exception of Type of Probation Termination as revealed by significance testing ($\alpha < .05$).

<u>Reason for Removal</u>	<u>Comparison Group</u>	<u>Group Reporting</u>
Deceased	(2)	2
Incarcerated DOC 15 Months	(1)	1
Total Removed from Post-Probation Study	(3)	3

<u>Variables</u>		<u>Comparison Group (n = 122)</u>	<u>Group Reporting (n = 122)</u>
Gender	Male	96 (78.7%)	96 (78.7%)
	Female	26 (21.3%)	26 (21.3%)
Ethnicity	Caucasian	78 (63.9%)	78 (63.9%)
	African-American	14 (11.5%)	11 (9.0%)
	Hispanic	30 (24.6%)	32 (26.2%)
	Unknown	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)
Age at End of Supervision	Mean	34.35 Years	34.95 Years
	Median	32.54 Years	33.79 Years
Supervision Level	Minimum	59 (48.4%)	59 (48.4%)
	Medium	63 (51.6%)	63 (51.6%)
Offense Type	Class 1 Felony	6 (4.9%)	6 (4.9%)
	Class 2 Felony	9 (7.4%)	9 (7.4%)
	Class 3 Felony	12 (9.8%)	9 (7.4%)
	Class 4 Felony	38 (31.1%)	43 (35.2%)
	Class A Misdemeanor	56 (45.9%)	53 (43.4%)
	Other Non-Felony	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.6%)
Actual Length of Supervision	Mean	21.33 Months	22.13 Months
	Median	22 Months	23 Months
Prior Correctional Supervision	No	77 (63.1%)	86 (70.5%)
	Yes	45 (36.9%)	36 (29.5%)
Type of Probation Termination *	Positive Termination	109 (89.3%)	117 (95.9%)
	Negative Termination	13 (10.7%)	5 (4.1%)

* Significant difference, $p > .05$

Operational Definitions

Demographic information, probation violations, and probation outcomes were accessible through Prober-Plus (PROBER), a software database customized exclusively for probation departments in Illinois and currently utilized by

the Lake County Division of Adult Probation. Re-offense and incarceration data was accessible using three independent sources of information: 1) Lake County Court Records Information Management System (CRIMS), 2) Law Enforcement Accessible Database System (LEADS), and 3) Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA). CRIMS provides arrest and conviction data exclusive to Lake County. LEADS provides statewide and interstate arrest and conviction data, though court-action related data is limited in some cases. Also, due to the proximity of Lake County to Wisconsin and the number of probation offenders residing in that state, WCCA was utilized in order to more accurately capture arrest and conviction data from the state of Wisconsin. Of the four databases used to retrieve information on program participants, only WCCA is accessible to the general public. All statistical data was analyzed using the software Statistical Program for Social Sciences – Version 13 (SPSS v.13).

Criminal records data was available for all study participants to track recidivism through CRIMS, LEADS, and WCCA. In some cases there were discrepancies in the date of offense recorded between CRIMS and LEADS pertaining to Lake County data. In these cases, CRIMS data was used to record the date of offense during the recording period. This recording interval for the probation period study began the date of Lake County probation intake for both the groups. Each group was followed through the termination of Lake County probation services. In addition to recording the rate of successful probation termination, two measures of recidivism during the probation period are also presented: 1) First Offense Resulting in Arrest, and 2) First Offense Resulting in Conviction. In both cases, recidivism is based on the first incidence of a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony class offense. There are several reasons for presenting both measures of recidivism: 1) Many program outcome studies present only arrest data as a measure of recidivism. This is due to both the accessibility and convenience of obtaining this data. Although this may be an inaccurate measure of criminal behavior, it does offer a means of comparison with existing studies. 2) Conviction data, though a more cumbersome measure to obtain, has long been considered a more reliable measure of criminal behavior (Bailey, 1970).

The tracking period for both the Group Reporting and Comparison groups following the termination of probation services was the date of probation termination through three years after that respective date. Only the Group Reporting condition experienced a population loss from one phase of the study to the next due to death and incarceration (see Table 6, above). Matched Comparison group participants were subsequently removed from the post-probation phase of the study. Remaining participants in each group numbered 122 (97.6% of the original sample). As previously noted, among these remaining cases, there were no significant differences between the groups in terms of gender, supervision level, ethnicity, age at the end of supervision, offense type, actual length of supervision, and prior correctional supervision. Between group differences did exist, however, in terms of the type of probation termination. This was the case when all supervision types were examined collectively and for medium-risk cases. All low-risk cases in the post-probation analysis ended their respective probation terms under favorable conditions. For this reason, additional

analysis during the post-probation follow-up period also examined whether the type of probation termination (e.g., positive termination) resulted in any differential outcomes for all case types and medium-risk cases only. These remaining participants were tracked for a post-probation period of thirty-six months. The same two measures of recidivism are presented: 1) First Offense Resulting in Arrest, and 2) First Offense Resulting in Conviction. In both cases, recidivism is based on the first incidence of a Class A Misdemeanor or Felony class offense.

Statistical Measures

The current analyses focuses on broad comparisons between participants of the Group Reporting Project and a Comparison group, as well as an examination of risk level (e.g., low-risk and medium risk) as a confounding factor, in terms of successful completion of probation, recidivism during probation and recidivism after termination of probation services. A chi-square test is used for each analysis. A chi-square test (also chi-squared or χ^2 test) is a statistical hypothesis test in which the sampling distribution of the test statistic is a chi-square distribution when the null hypothesis is true, meaning that the sampling distribution (if the null hypothesis is true) can be made to approximate a chi-square distribution as closely as desired by making the sample size large enough. In regards to the Group Reporting Project, it was the working-hypothesis that the group reporting condition, versus standard face-to-face reporting, would not be detrimental to probationers’ successful completion of probation, or short- (during probation supervision) and long-term (after probation supervision) recidivism. For this reason, the *Chi-Square* test was considered most appropriate, in order to support this null-hypothesis.

Effect-size is a measure of the statistical relationship between the treatment intervention and the outcome variable. Correlations (*r*) and the correlation coefficients (*r*²) are both examples of effect sizes measures (Cohen & Manion, 1989). Effect-size measurements typically range from +1.0 to -1.0 (Hunt, 1997). In the context of an intervention program, a correlational effect size indicates the magnitude and direction of the standardized covariance between the treatment condition (independent variable) and outcome (dependent variable). Interpretation of the correlational effect size needs to occur within the context of the study. In this case, indications of a positive (+) effect size indicate that the outcome favors the Group Reporting condition. A general guide to interpreting the magnitude of correlational effects (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Losel, 1995) is that:

<u>General Effect Size</u>	<u>Correlation (<i>r</i>)</u>	<u>Correlation Coefficient (<i>r</i>²)</u>
• Small	0.1	0.01
• Medium	0.3	0.06
• Large	0.5	0.14

A finding that is considered *statistically significant* means that a particular result is unlikely to have occurred by chance. An alpha level of .05 (*p*) was used for all statistical tests. A statistically significant difference at this alpha level and within this context means there is statistical evidence that a difference does exist between the two groups due

to the influence of the treatment variable (group reporting) with 95% or greater certainty (or that there is less than a 5% chance that the measured differences between the groups are due to chance). Statistical significance, however, does not imply that the difference is necessarily large, important, or significant in the common meaning of the word.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF PROBATION SUPERVISION: All Cases

Termination codes were available in PROBER for all study participants. As previously noted, there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of the length of supervision. Both Group Reporting participants and Control group participants were tracked from their intake date at Lake County Adult Probation through their termination from supervision. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the total number of termination categories between groups. This analysis revealed no significant differences between groups for termination categories, $F(1, 248) = 1.488, p = .224$. Post hoc analysis, however, revealed significant differences between groups for the Warrant / Absconder Status category (see Table 8).

Table 8		
Probation Termination Categories		
Termination Category	Comparison Group (n = 125)	Group Reporting (n = 125)
Early Termination	34 (27.2%)	32 (25.6%)
Scheduled Termination	77 (61.6%)	84 (67.2%)
Other Termination	3 (2.4%)	5 (4.0%)
Unsatisfactory Termination	4 (3.2%)	3 (2.4%)
Warrant/Absconder Status *	5 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Revoked – Technical	2 (1.6%)	1 (0.8%)
* Significant difference noted, $p < .05$		
Positive Probation Termination	112 (89.6%)	118 (94.4%)
Negative Probation Termination	13 (10.4%)	7 (5.6%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.089$ ($r^2 = + 0.008$); $p = .162$		

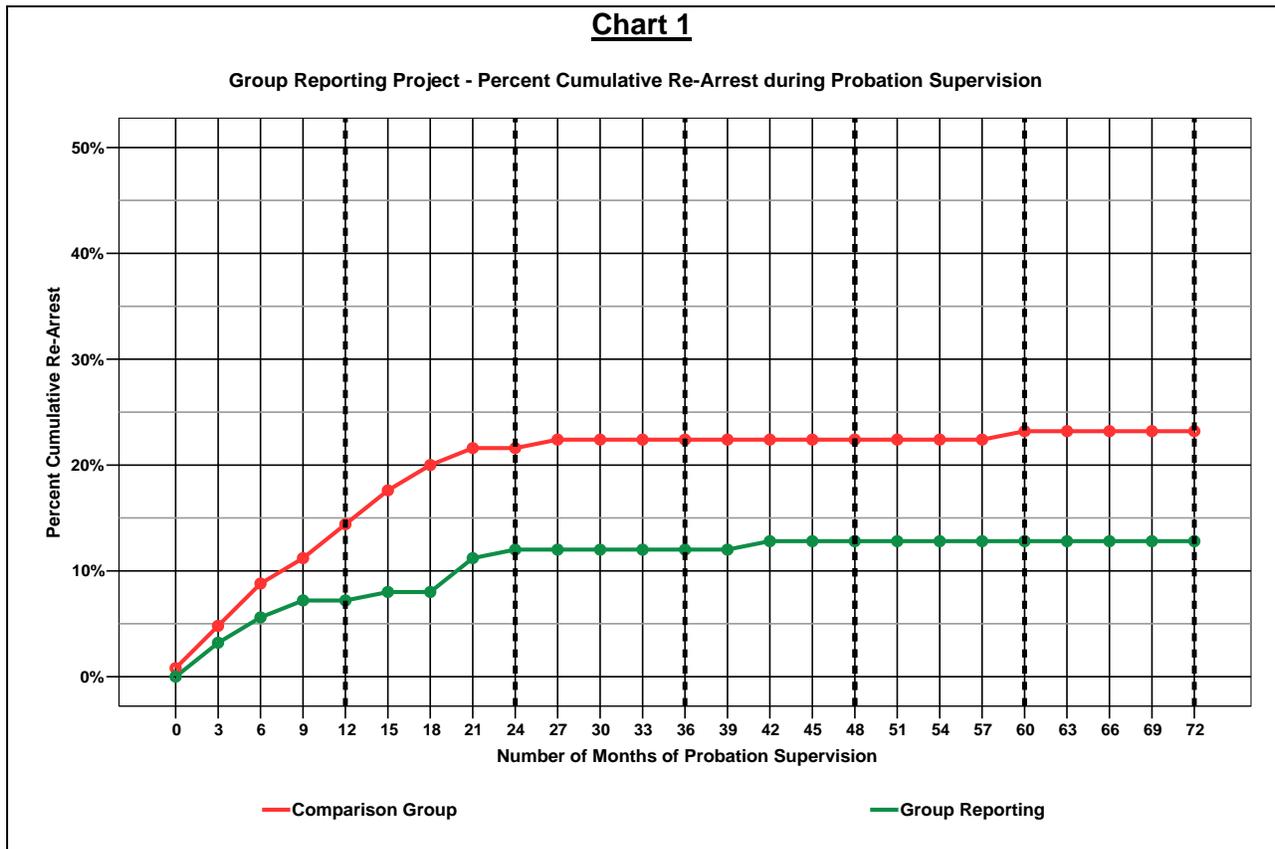
Each of the above-referenced termination categories were further collapsed into dichotomous categories reflecting successful or unsuccessful termination of probation supervision (also see Table 8). Scheduled and Early Terminations were considered successful; Absconders, Unsatisfactory Terminations, and Revocation were considered unsuccessful. The generally neutral termination category of Other Termination was investigated through both PROBER discharge notes and CRIMS court case data to reveal the underlying cause for termination. Two cases of Other Termination among the Group Reporting condition were due to the death of participants, others were incorrectly classified as several participants were in custody with pending charges at the time of termination. In those remaining cases in which an arrest immediately preceded “Other Termination,” termination was considered as unsuccessful. As evaluated by Chi Square test, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups in the resulting rate of successful termination from probation services, $\chi^2 = (1, N=250) = 1.96, p = .162$. The small effect size ($r = + 0.089$), however, does favor the Group Reporting condition.

FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN ARREST DURING PROBATION SUPERVISION – All Cases

The recidivism rate for all Group Reporting participants based on being charged with a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 12.8%, compared to 23.2% for the Comparison group (see Table 9). The effect size is considered small ($r = + 0.134$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was a statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 250) = 4.58, p = .032$.

Table 9		
<u>First Offense Resulting in Arrest during Probation Supervision – All Cases</u>		
	Comparison Group (n = 125)	Group Reporting (n = 125)
No arrests	96 (76.8%)	109 (87.2%)
At least one new arrest	29 (23.2%)	16 (12.8%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.134$ ($r^2 = + 0.018$); $p < .05$		

The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of probation. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new arrests that occur within the first 30 days for each group.

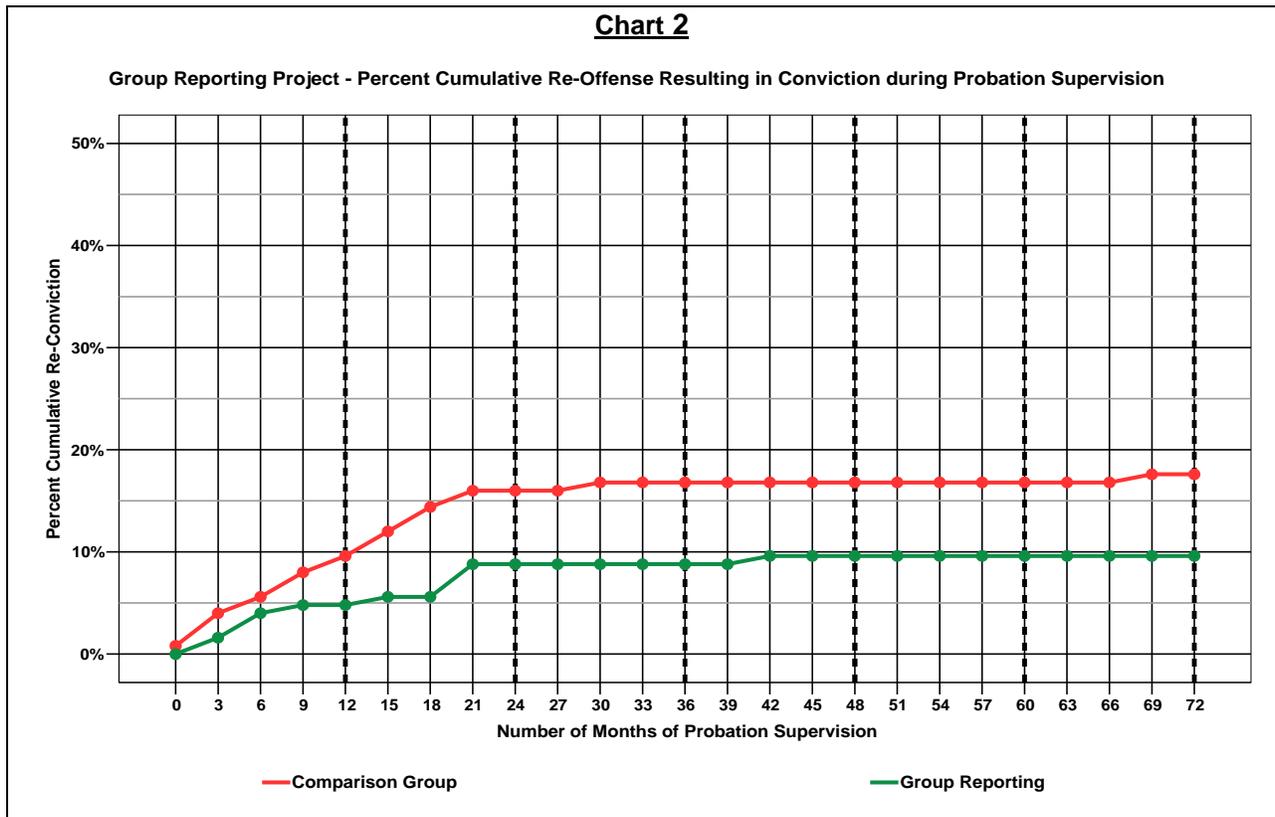


FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN CONVICTION DURING PROBATION SUPERVISION – All Cases

The recidivism rate for all Group Reporting participants having been convicted of a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 9.6%, compared to 17.6% for the comparison group (see Table 10). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was not a statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 250) = 3.40, p = .065$. This number, however, is approaching significance, and the small effect size ($r = + 0.118$) does favor the Group Reporting Condition.

	Comparison Group (n = 125)	Group Reporting (n = 125)
No convictions	103 (82.4%)	113 (90.4%)
At least one new conviction	22 (17.6%)	12 (9.6%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.118$ ($r^2 = + 0.014$); $p = .065$		

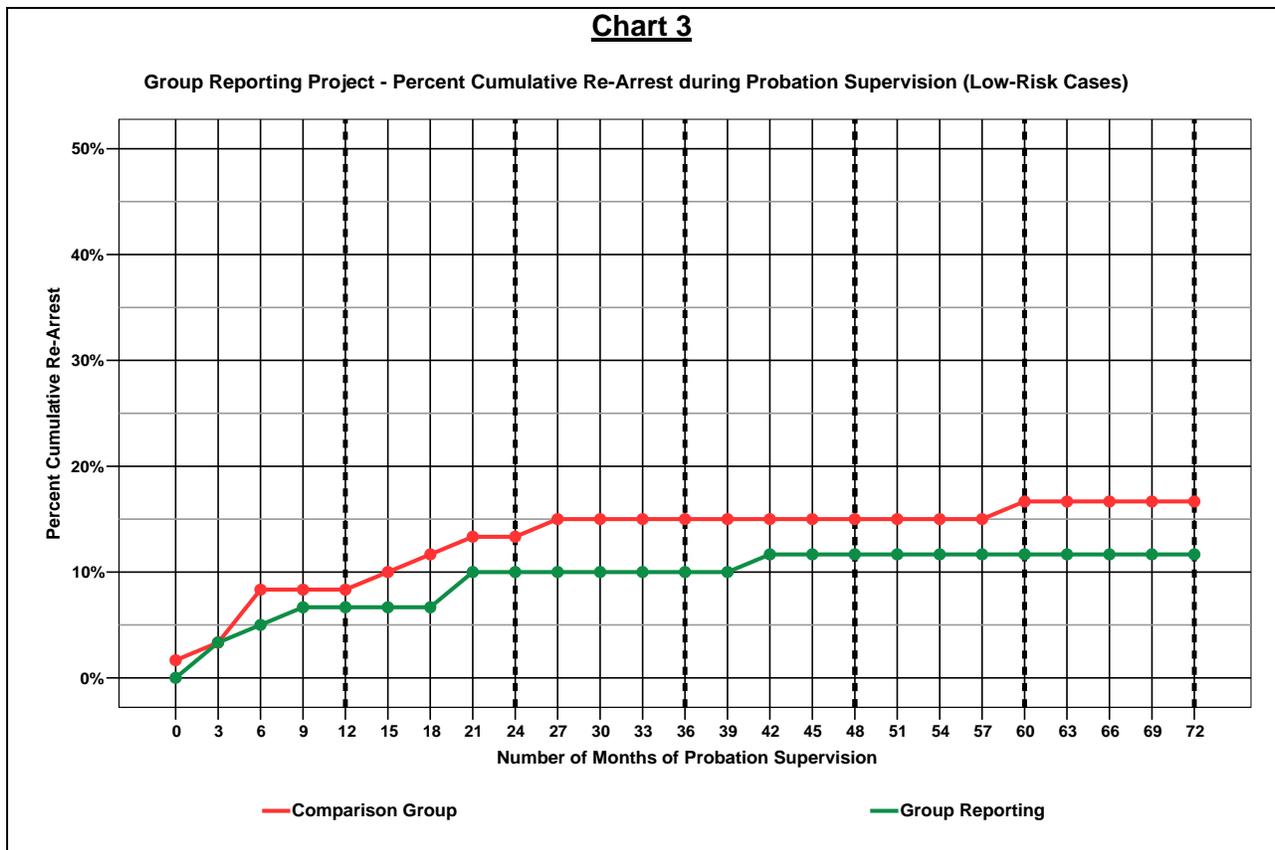
The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-conviction rate over the course of probation (see Chart 2). The date of incident, however, is not the date of conviction, but the date the offense occurred. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new offenses resulting in conviction that occur within the first 30 days for each group.



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN ARREST DURING PROBATION SUPERVISION – Low-Risk Cases

The recidivism rate for Low-Risk Group Reporting participants based on being charged with a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 11.7%, compared to 16.7% for the Low-Risk Comparison group (see Table 11). The effect size is considered extremely small ($r = + 0.071$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was not a statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between these groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 120) = 0.617, p = .432$. The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of probation (see Chart 3).

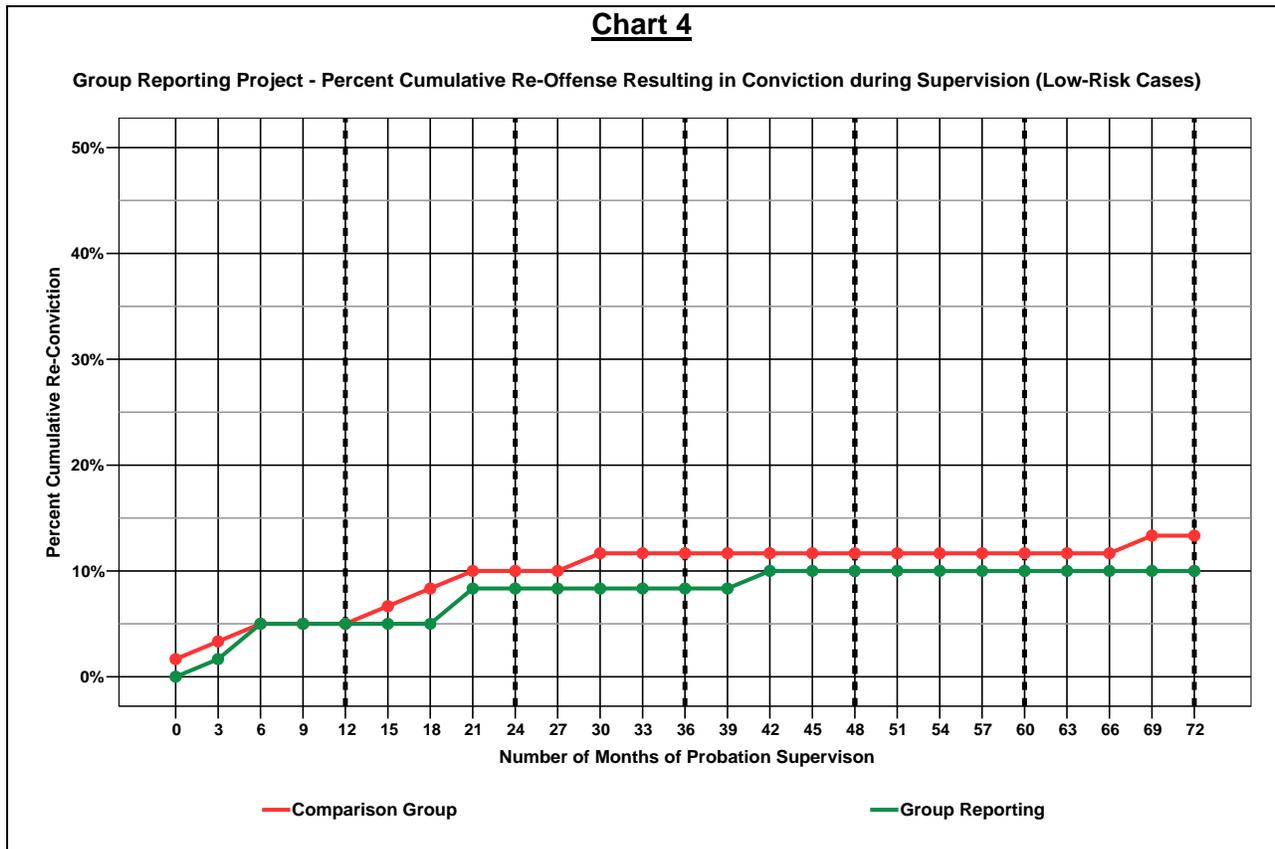
Table 11		
First Offense Resulting in Arrest during Probation Supervision - Low-Risk Cases		
	Comparison Group (n = 60)	Group Reporting (n = 60)
No arrests	50 (83.3%)	53 (88.3%)
At least one new arrest	10 (16.7%)	7 (11.7%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.071$ ($r^2 = + 0.005$); $p = .436$		



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN CONVICTION DURING PROBATION SUPERVISION – Low-Risk

The recidivism rate for Low-Risk Group Reporting participants having been convicted of a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 10.0%, compared to 13.3% for the comparison group (see Table 12). The effect size is considered extremely small – almost nil ($r = + 0.055$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was also not a statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 120) = 0.323, p = .573$. The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-conviction rate over the course of probation (see Chart 4).

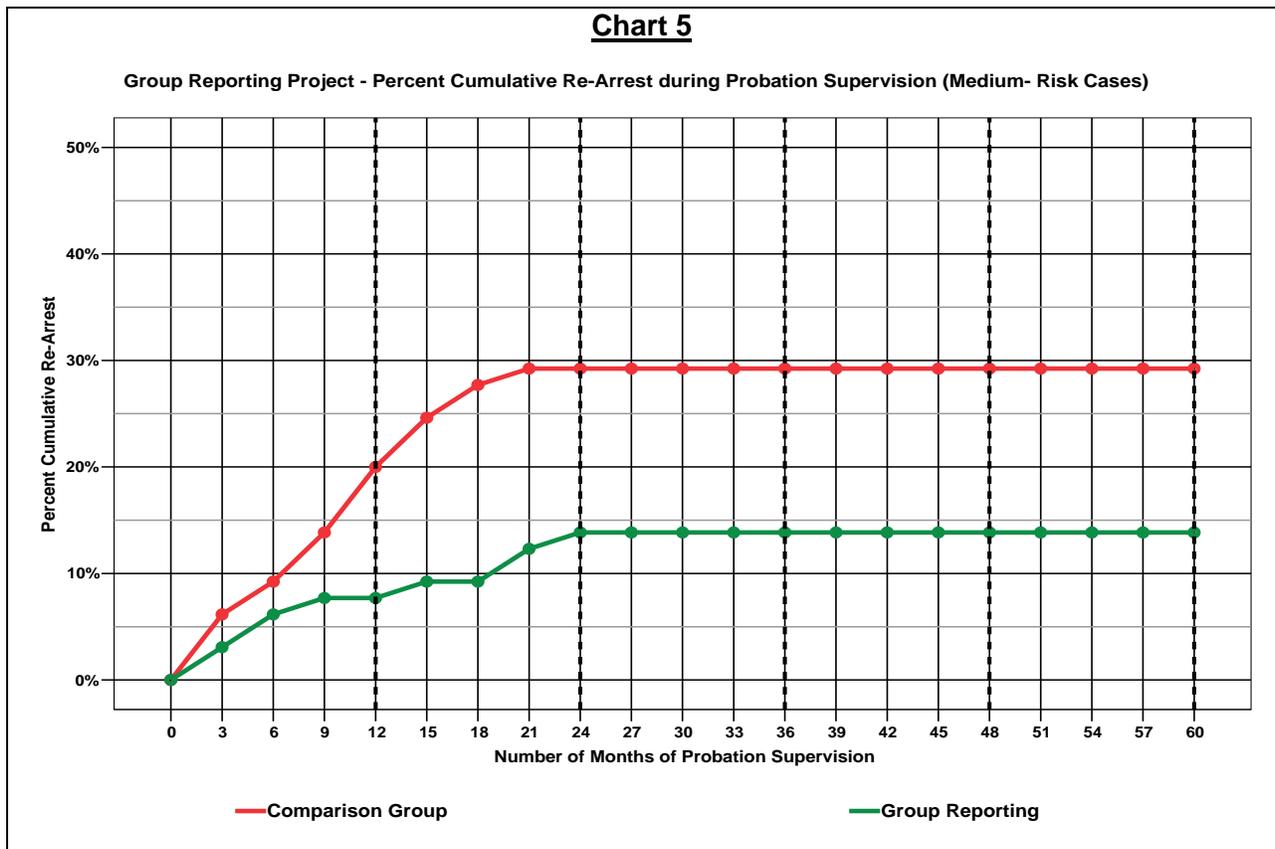
Table 12		
First Offense Resulting in Conviction during Supervision - Low Risk Cases		
	Comparison Group (n = 60)	Group Reporting (n = 60)
No convictions	52 (86.7%)	54 (90.0%)
At least one new conviction	8 (13.3%)	6 (10.0%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.055$ ($r^2 = + 0.003$); $p = .573$		



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN ARREST DURING PROBATION SUPERVISION – Medium-Risk Cases

The recidivism rate for Medium-Risk Group Reporting participants based on being charged with a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 13.9%, compared to 29.2% for the Medium-Risk Comparison group (see Table 13). The effect size is considered better-than-small ($r = + 0.187$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was a statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between these groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 130) = 4.55, p = .033$. The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of probation (see Chart 5).

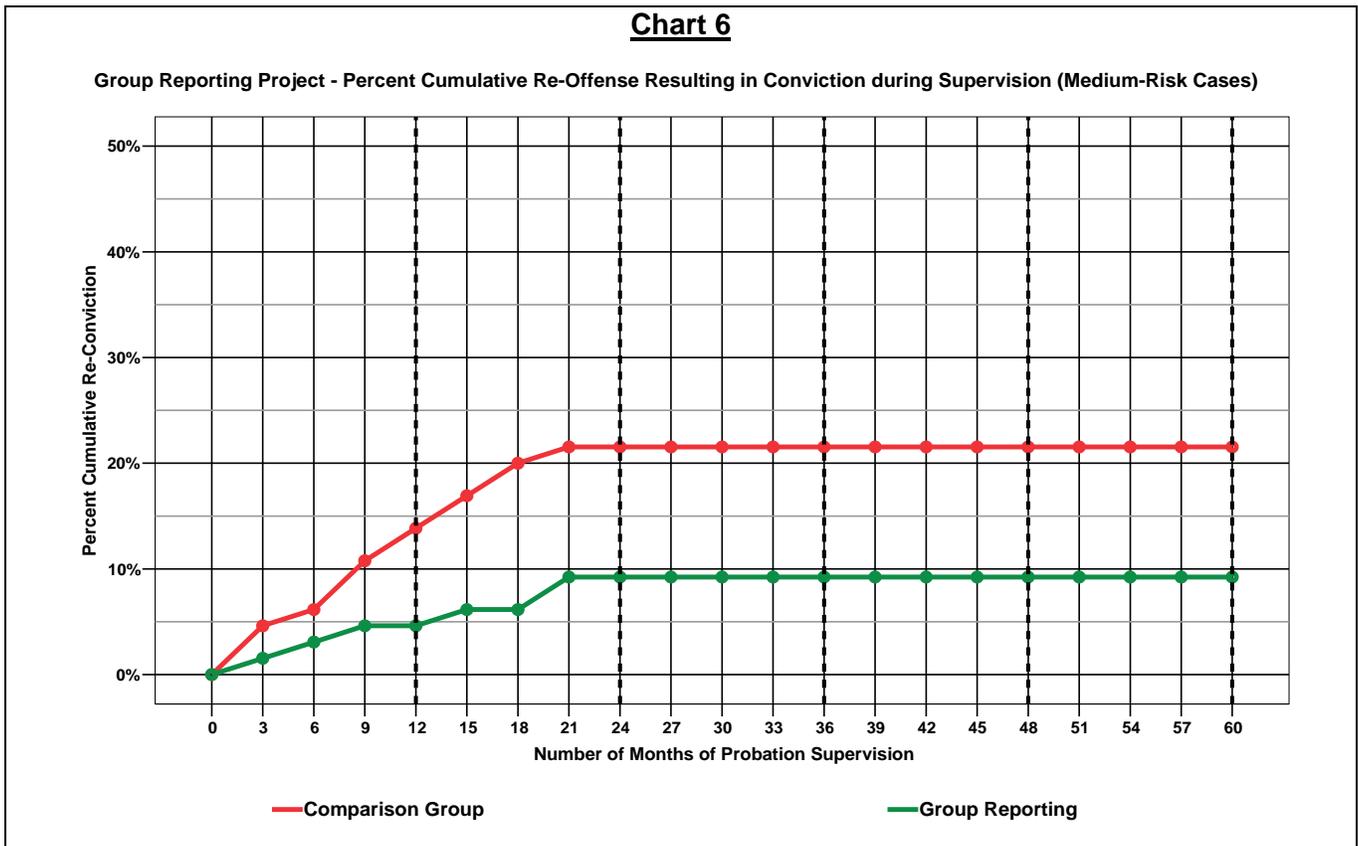
	Comparison Group (n = 65)	Group Reporting (n = 65)
No arrests	46 (70.8%)	56 (86.1%)
At least one new arrest	19 (29.2%)	9 (13.9%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.187$ ($r^2 = + 0.035$); $p < .05$		



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN CONVICTION DURING PROBATION SUPERVISION – Medium-Risk

The recidivism rate for Medium-Risk Group Reporting participants having been convicted of a new offense during the probation follow-up period was 9.2%, compared to 21.5% for the comparison group (see Table 14). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was not a statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 130) = 3.78, p = .052$. This number, however, is approaching significance, and the better-than-small effect size ($r = + 0.170$) does favor the Group Reporting Condition. The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-conviction rate over the course of probation (see Chart 6).

Table 14		
First Offense Resulting in Conviction during Supervision - Medium-Risk Cases		
	Comparison Group (n = 65)	Group Reporting (n = 65)
No convictions	51 (78.5%)	59 (90.8%)
At least one new conviction	14 (21.5%)	6 (9.2%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.170$ ($r^2 = + 0.029$); $p = .052$		

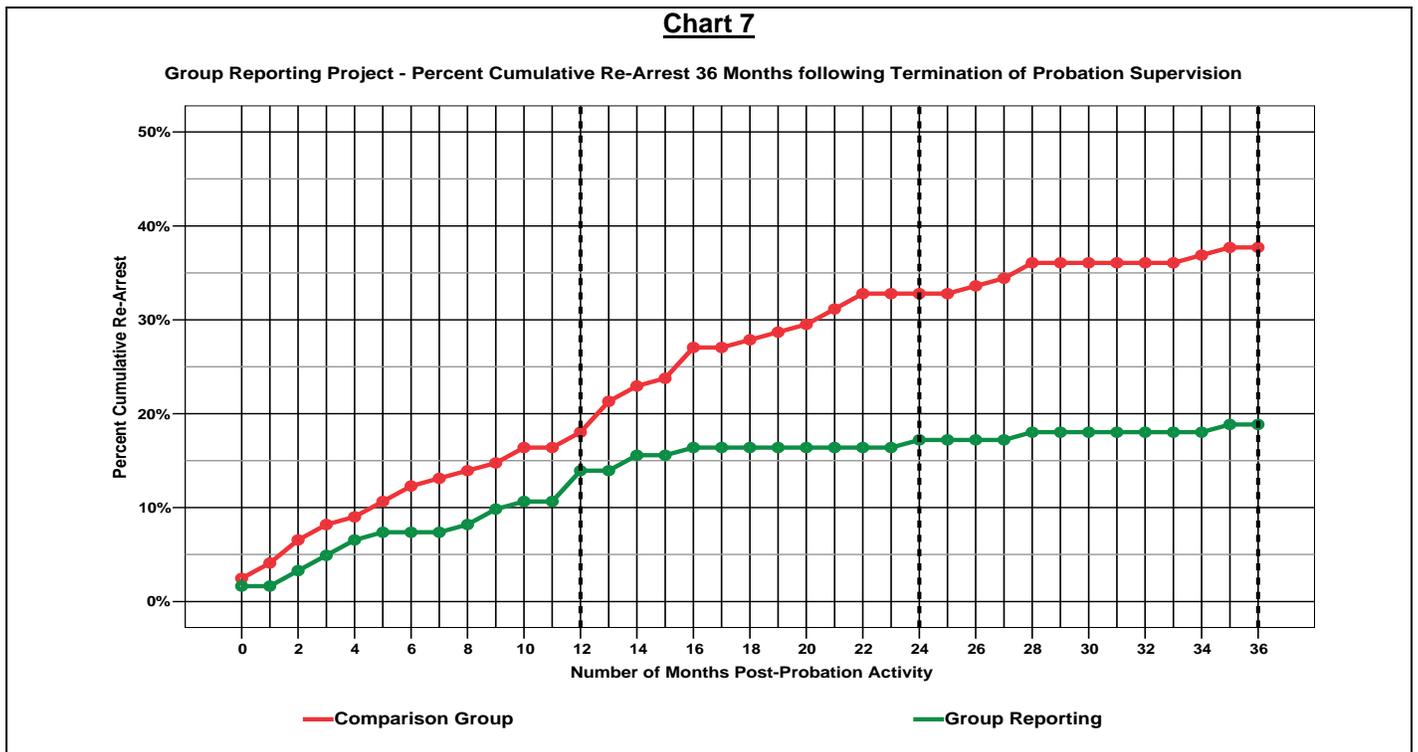


FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN ARREST 36 MOS. FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF PROBATION: All Cases

The recidivism rate for all Group Reporting participants having been charged with a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 18.9%, compared to 37.7% for the Comparison group (see Table 15). The effect size is considered better-than-small ($r = + 0.210$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was also a statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 244) = 10.69, p < .001$. The type of probation termination had no impact on the rate of new arrests, as Positive Termination cases in each of the groups recidivated at a rate similar to that of the larger groups and the effect size was identical (also see Table 15).

Table 15		
First Offense Resulting in Arrest 36 Months following Termination of Probation – All Cases		
All Cases	Comparison Group (n = 122)	Group Reporting (n = 122)
No arrests	76 (62.3%)	99 (81.1%)
At least one new arrest	46 (37.7%)	23 (18.9%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.210$ ($r^2 = + 0.044$); $p < .05$		
Positive Termination Cases	Comparison Group (n = 109)	Group Reporting (n = 117)
No arrests	68 (62.4%)	95 (81.2%)
At least one new arrest	41 (37.6%)	22 (18.8%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.210$ ($r^2 = + 0.044$); $p < .05$		

The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period. A time-scale of **36 months** is used because of the standardized follow-up period. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new arrests that occur within the first 30 days for each group.

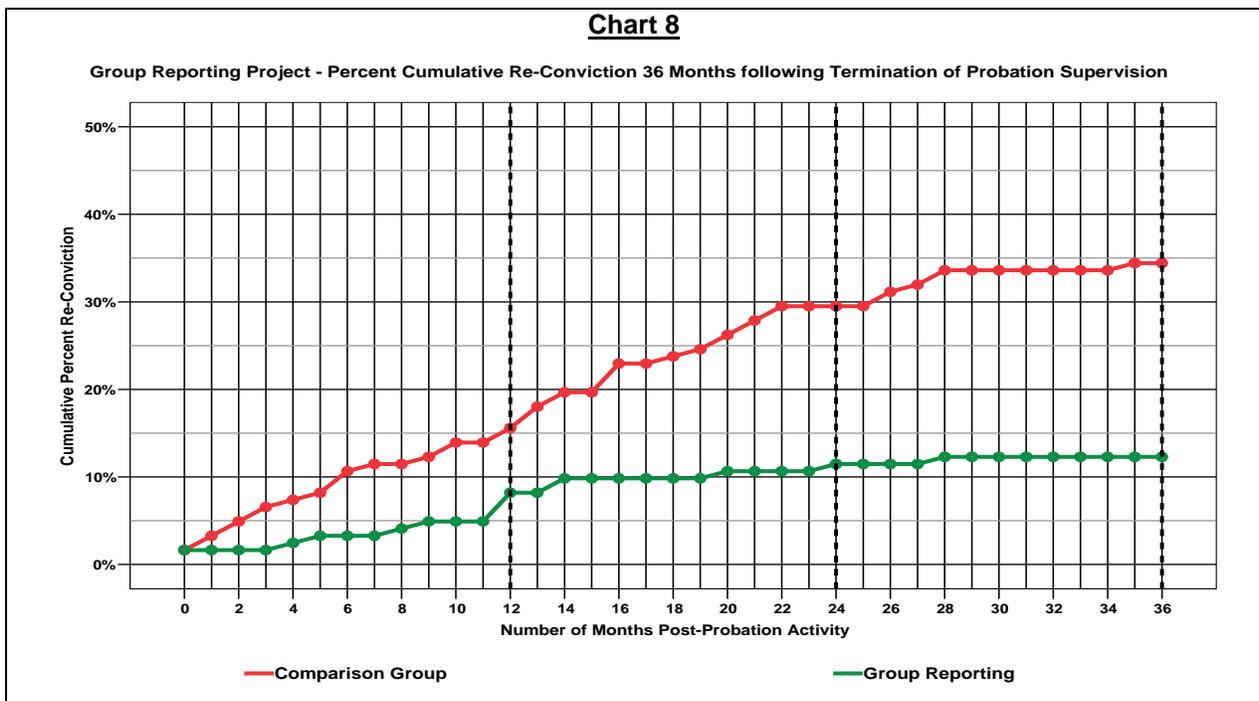


FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN CONVICTION 36 MOS. FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF PROBATION: All Cases

The recidivism rate for Group Reporting participants having been convicted of a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 12.3%, compared to 34.4% for the Comparison group (see Table 16). The effect size is considered medium ($r = + 0.261$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was also a statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 244) = 16.69, p < .001$. Type of probation termination had little impact on the rate of new arrests, as Positive Termination cases in each of the groups recidivated at a rate similar to that of the larger groups and the effect sizes were nearly identical (also see Table 16).

Table 16		
First Offense Resulting in Conviction 36 Months following Termination of Probation – All Cases		
All Cases	Comparison Group (n = 122)	Group Reporting (n = 122)
No Convictions	80 (65.6%)	107 (87.7%)
At least one new conviction	42 (34.4%)	15 (12.3%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.261$ ($r^2 = + 0.068$); $p < .05$		
Positive Termination Cases	Comparison Group (n = 109)	Group Reporting (n = 117)
No Convictions	72 (66.1%)	103 (88.0%)
At least one new conviction	37 (33.9%)	14 (12.0%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.263$ ($r^2 = + 0.069$); $p < .05$		

The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative arrest rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period (see Chart 8). A time-scale of **36 months** is used because of the standardized follow-up period. Hash marks divide the chart into 12-month increments. This illustration does not start at a true-zero in order to indicate the percentage of new offenses resulting in conviction that occur within the first month for each group.



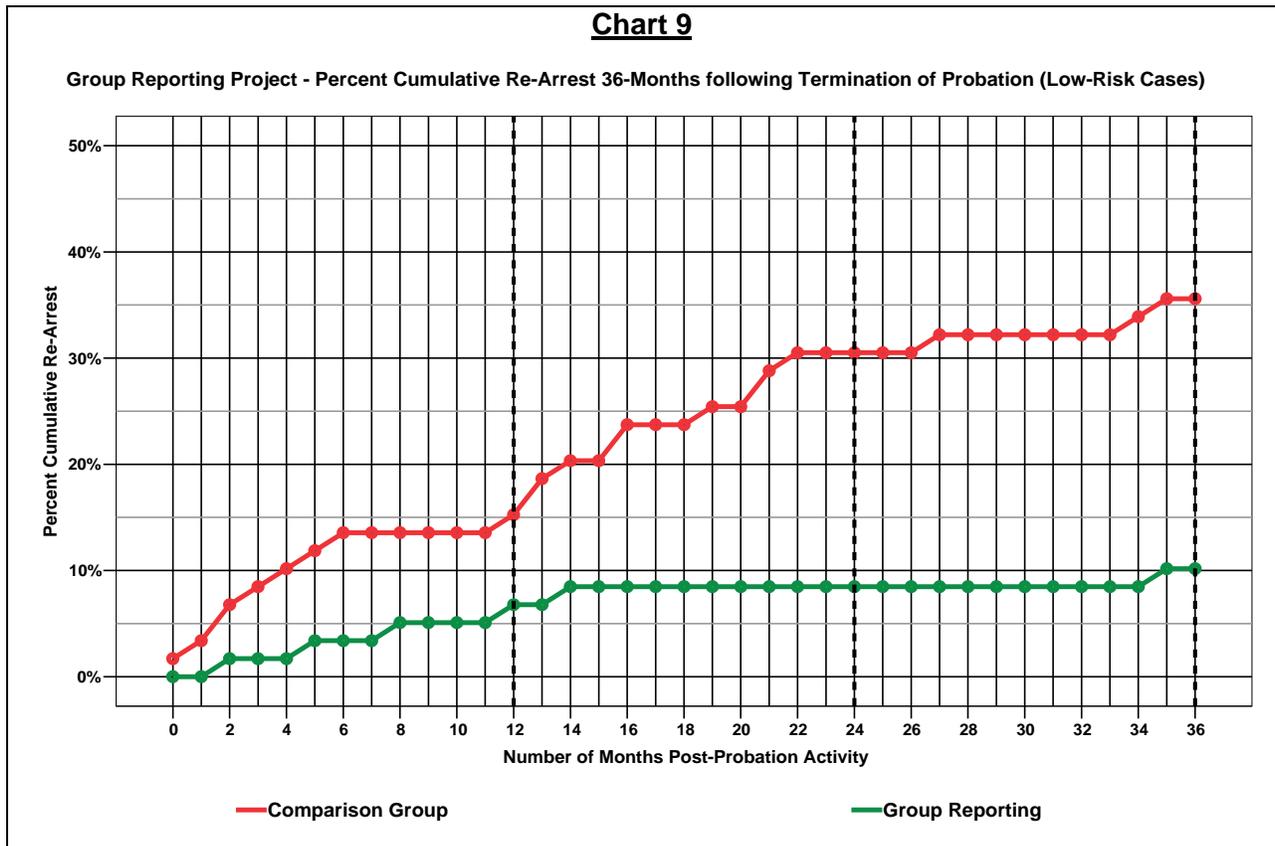
FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN ARREST 36 MOS. FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF PROBATION: Low-Risk

The recidivism rate for Low-Risk Group Reporting participants having been charged with a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 10.2%, compared to 35.6% for the Low-Risk Comparison group (see Table 17). The effect size is considered medium ($r = + 0.303$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was also a statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 118) = 10.81, p < .001$. The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-conviction rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period (see Chart 9).

Table 17
First Offense Resulting in Arrest 36 Months following Termination of Probation - Low-Risk Cases

All Low-Risk Cases	Comparison Group (n = 59)	Group Reporting (n = 59)
No arrests	38 (64.4%)	53 (89.8%)
At least one new arrest	21 (35.6%)	6 (10.2%)

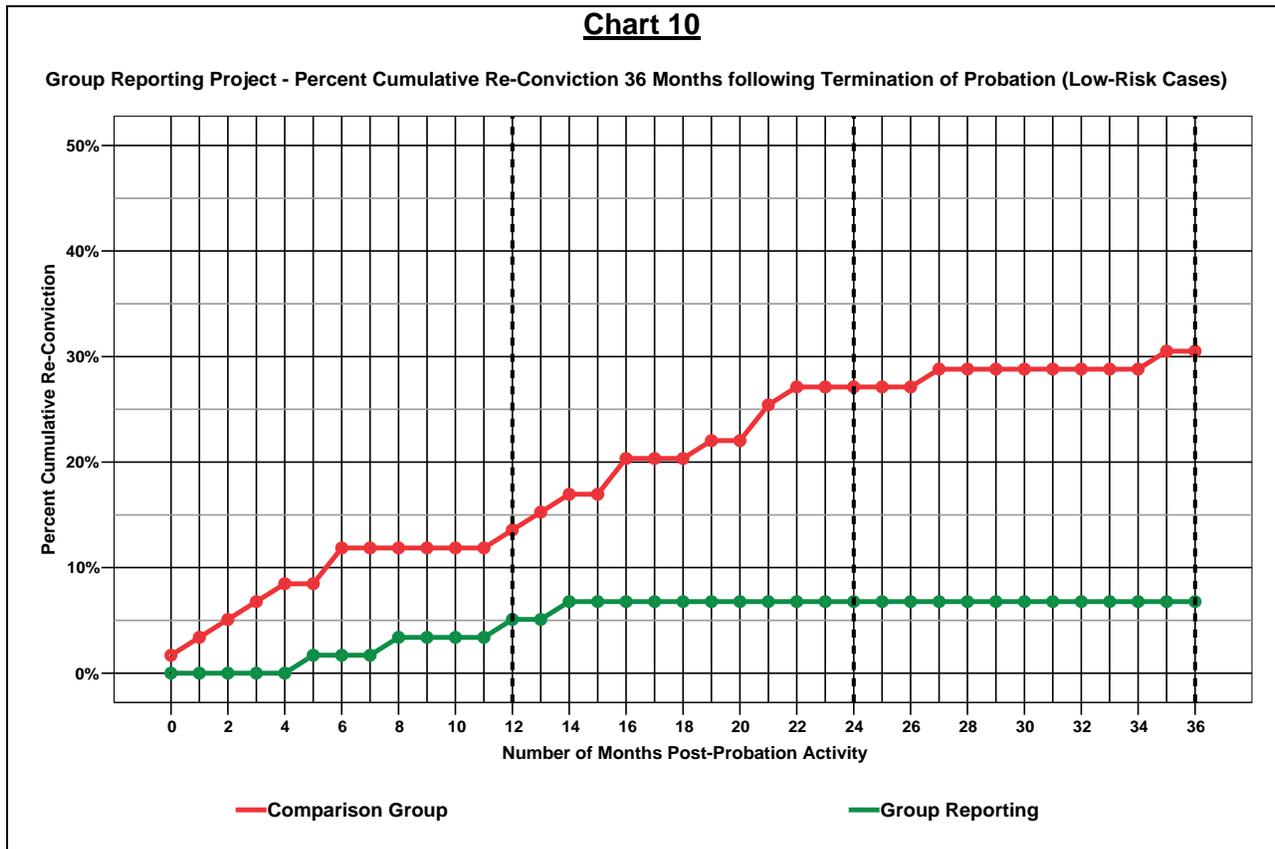
Effect Size: $r = + 0.303$ ($r^2 = + 0.092$); $p < .05$



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN CONVICTION 36 MOS. FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF PROBATION: Low Risk

The recidivism rate for Low-Risk Group Reporting participants having been convicted of a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 6.8%, compared to 30.5% for the Low-Risk Comparison group (see Table 18). The effect size is considered medium ($r = +0.305$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was also a statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 118) = 10.95, p < .001$. The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-conviction rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period (see Chart 10).

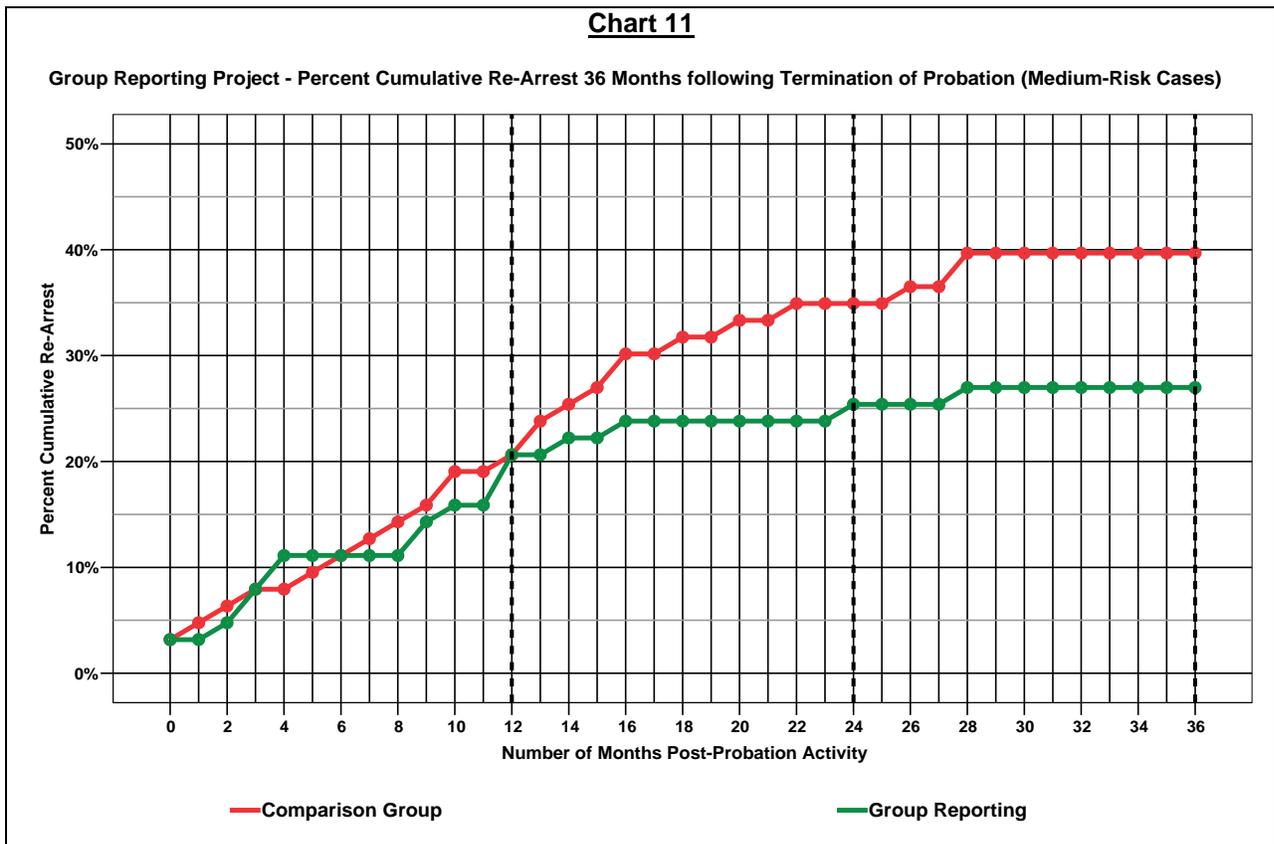
Table 18		
First Offense Resulting in Conviction 36 Months following Termination of Probation - Low-Risk Cases		
All Low-Risk Cases	Comparison Group (n = 59)	Group Reporting (n = 59)
No Convictions	41 (69.5%)	55 (93.2%)
At least one new conviction	18 (30.5%)	4 (6.8%)
Effect Size: $r = +0.305$ ($r^2 = +0.093$); $p < .05$		



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN ARREST 36 MOS. FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF PROBATION: Medium Risk

The recidivism rate for Medium-Risk Group Reporting participants having been charged with a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 27.0%, compared to 39.7% for the Medium-Risk Comparison group (see Table 19). The effect size is considered small ($r = + 0.134$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was not a statistically significant difference in new arrest rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 126) = 2.29, p = .131$. The type of probation termination had little impact on the rate of new arrests, as Positive Termination cases from each of the groups recidivated at a rate similar to that of the larger groups and the effect sizes were nearly identical (also see Table 19). The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-arrest rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period (see Chart 11).

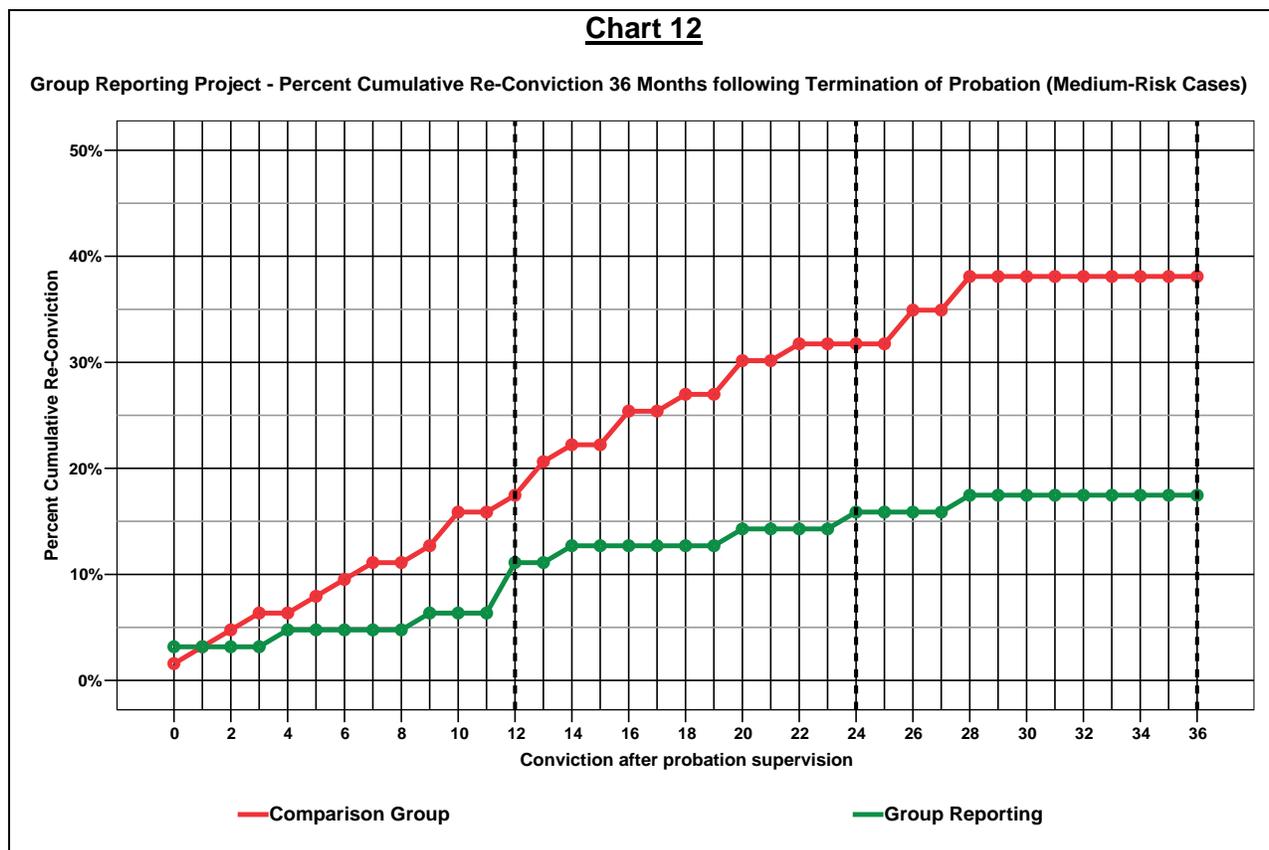
Table 19			
First Offense Resulting in Arrest 36 Mos. following Termination of Probation - Medium-Risk Cases			
All Cases		Comparison Group (n = 63)	Group Reporting (n = 63)
	No arrests	38 (60.3%)	46 (73.0%)
	At least one new arrest	25 (39.7%)	17 (27.0%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.134$ ($r^2 = + 0.018$); $p = .131$			
Positive Termination Cases		Comparison Group (n = 50)	Group Reporting (n = 58)
	No arrests	30 (60.0%)	42 (72.4%)
	At least one new arrest	20 (40.0%)	16 (27.6%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.131$ ($r^2 = + 0.017$); $p = .176$			



FIRST OFFENSE RESULTING IN CONVICTION 36 MOS. FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF PROBATION: Medium Risk

The recidivism rate for Medium-Risk Group Reporting participants having been convicted of a new offense during the post-probation follow-up period was 17.5%, compared to 38.1% for the Medium-Risk Comparison group (see Table 20). The effect size is considered better-than-small ($r = + 0.230$). As evaluated by a Chi Square test, there was a statistically significant difference in new conviction rates between the groups, $\chi^2 = (1, N = 126) = 6.69, p = .010$. Type of probation termination had no impact on the rate of new arrests, as Positive Termination cases in each of the groups recidivated at a rate similar to that of the larger groups and the effect sizes were nearly identical (also see Table 20). The following time-series analysis illustrates the cumulative re-conviction rate over the course of the post-probation follow-up period (see Chart 12).

Table 20			
First Offense Resulting in Conviction 36 Mos. following Termination of Probation - Medium-Risk Cases			
All Cases *	No Convictions	Comparison Group (n = 63) 39 (61.9%)	Group Reporting (n = 63) 52 (82.5%)
	At least one new conviction	24 (38.1%)	11 (17.5%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.230$ ($r^2 = + 0.053$); $p < .05$			
Positive Termination Cases *	No Convictions	Comparison Group (n = 50) 31 (62.0%)	Group Reporting (n = 58) 48 (82.8%)
	At least one new conviction	19 (38.0%)	10 (17.2%)
Effect Size: $r = + 0.235$ ($r^2 = + 0.055$); $p < .05$			



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DISCUSSION

This investigation was designed to evaluate the efficacy of Lake County Adult Probation Department's Group Reporting Project. Group Reporting is an alternative reporting strategy to the traditional one-to-one meeting requirements between probationers and probation officers for low- and medium-risk offenders. The hypothesis entering this investigation was that Group Reporting would prove to be no less effective for low- and medium-risk probationers than tradition reporting requirements, which would support its continued use within the department for lower-risk offenders and allow resources to be focused towards interventions with higher-risk offenders. 125 probationers who participated in the Group Reporting Project were contrasted with a matched comparison group of 125 offenders who had completed their probation terms just prior to the implementation of Group Reporting in Lake County. Probationers in the two groups were tracked for the duration of their probation terms, up to 72 months. All participants were assessed for the termination status of their probation supervision and any new criminal offense charges and convictions. In addition, offenders who remained in the community at the conclusion of their probation terms (97.6% of the original sample) were tracked for an additional 36 months and assessed for any new criminal charges and convictions.

Completion of Probation Supervision

The results concerning any differences among participants in terms of their termination status at the completion of Probation Services were considered non-significant, though the overall effect size did favor the Group Reporting condition. Group Reporting participants had a successful probation termination rate slightly better than that of the Comparison Group (94.4% compared to 89.6%). In addition, Group Reporters had a *scheduled termination* rate of 67.2% compared to 61.6% for the Comparison Group. Early termination from probation, which was considered a motivator for Group Reporting participants, however, favored the Comparison Group, being 27.2% compared to 25.6% for the Group Reporting Group, though these results were also considered non-significant. Despite the lack of statistically significant differences between the groups, the results of this analysis are considered positive. Not only was the null-hypothesis (our goal, in this case) supported, but there was a small effect in favor of the group reporting condition.

Recidivism during Probation Supervision

The results concerning recidivism while on probation supervision were likewise favorable towards the group reporting condition, though not all results were statistically significant. There appears to be a trend toward a reduced number of future criminal offenses while on probation among those who participated in Group Reporting. Differences between the Group Reporting Group and the Comparison Group were evident not only in the percentage of first arrests (12.8% for Group Reporters compared to 23.2% for Comparisons: a statistically significant difference, indicating a

reduction of 10.4%), but also in the percentage of new convictions (9.6% for Group Reporters compared to 17.6% for Comparisons, though not statistically significant, this represents a reduction of 8.0%). The effects are even more dramatic for medium-risk offenders, who are more likely than low-risk offenders to be arrested (and subsequently convicted) during probation supervision.

The results obtained from this analysis of the Group Reporting Project provide sufficient evidence that this is a supervision strategy that not only effective in terms of its impact on offenders' success during supervision, but that it is also a very efficient means of supervising low- and medium-risk offenders in the community. Reallocating precious staff time and department resources, otherwise spent supervising these lower-risk offenders, into programs and supervision for higher-risk offenders can result in lower recidivism rates among all classes of offenders. Even small effects in reducing recidivism can have very large practical implications. Committing a new criminal offense while on probation supervision, especially that of a Felony or Class A Misdemeanor offense, may result in revocation and incarceration at either the county or state level. If new offense rates can be impacted by the provision of services at the community level, the potential cost-savings could easily be in the millions of dollars.

Recidivism after Probation Supervision

This investigation also provides compelling evidence that low- and medium-risk Group Reporting participants do not recidivate as quickly as similar, traditionally supervised offenders while in the community, free from the additional scrutiny provided by probation supervision. The results of this study indicated that traditionally supervised low- and medium-risk offenders recidivated (as measured by re-arrest) at nearly identical rates within three years of termination from probation (35.6% and 39.7%, respectively). Group Reporters, however, were re-arrested significantly less during the first three years after probation. Low-risk Group Reporters demonstrated a significant reduction in recidivism as measured by both re-arrests (10.2%, a 25.6% reduction compared to the low-risk Comparison group) and re-conviction (6.8%, a 23.7% reduction compared to the low-risk Comparison Group). Medium-risk Group Reporters also recidivated less than the medium-risk Comparison group participants. Though not statistically significant, their re-arrest rate was less than that of comparisons (27.0% compared to 39.7%); and their re-conviction rate was significantly less than that of the Comparison group (17.5% compared to 31.8%).

Future Research

These results suggest that Group Reporting may be an effective intervention with low- and medium-risk offenders in at least forestalling, if not preventing, continued criminal activity, and that its effects may also be long-lasting. Though an intensive examination of those factors that influence that effect are beyond the scope of the current study, several theories may prove useful for future investigation:

1. As offender risk and need assessment has become more sophisticated, offenders are more likely to be placed in appropriate treatment programs in addition to the supervision and services provided by probation services. This trend is true not only nationally, but locally as well. Lake County Adult Probation Services and the 19th Judicial Circuit, in general, have become more pro-active over the past ten years in referring probationers into community-based treatment programs designed to address specific criminogenic risk factors. The influence of community-based programming in addition to Group Reporting was not examined as part of this study. As treatment and supervision record-keeping processes are improved, however, this factor may become more accessible to examination.
2. Although early indications from the Group Reporting Project indicated that participants perceive their experience with the group reporting format as generally positive (Brooks, 2003; see p. 11 of this report), this study did not endeavor to match probationers' perceptions of probation with any of the outcomes found in this report. Applegate, Smith, Sitren, and Springer (2009) reported that most probationers in a sample of those reporting to a probation office for traditional face-to-face reporting believed that their sentence was deserved and that the services that they received through the probation office were rehabilitative and served as a deterrent to future criminal behavior. Applegate et al, however, did not examine whether these perceptions were, in fact, related to actual outcomes during or after probation supervision. Perhaps probationers in the present study felt that the information and opportunities provided by the group reporting format were more helpful and meaningful than those received by the traditional reporting group, and that this positive perception of their probation experience translated into more successful outcomes.
3. Probation officers are considered to be the principle change agents for offenders on supervision (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2005; Lurigio, Olson, & Snowden, 2009). The influence of particular officers or teams of group reporting facilitators on short- and long-term outcomes was also not examined as part of this study.

Future Goals for the Lake County Group Reporting Project

Group work has been a long established and often the preferred method of intervention with probationers (Vanstone, 2004; 2005). Research with higher-risk offenders has demonstrated that participation in treatment programs and services can positively influence recidivism. For lower-risk offenders, however, life skills programs (Petersilia, 2007) have recently been evidenced to be the most efficient use of scarce correctional resources, as well as the best way to increase public safety. The present study provides supportive evidence for the continued use of group reporting as a viable probation strategy among lower-risk offenders in Lake County as a means of both reducing continued criminal activity and re-allocating staff resources towards higher-risk offenders.

The following programmatic issues are currently being addressed by the Group Reporting Project:

- Automation of the referral process to assist supervising probation officers in making appropriate and timely referrals to the Group Reporting Project.
- Accepting referrals for first-time felony DUI offenders into the Group Reporting Project.
- Recording and maintaining comprehensive process and outcome statistics for Group Reporting participants throughout their probation term.
- Within the General Field and DUI Group Reporting Projects there are plans to tailor presentations based on the participants' LSI-R criminogenic risk needs.

Recommendations

In addition to these proposed enhancements, the Division of Adult Probation Services is also in the planning stages of expanding Group Reporting for medium-risk cases. Currently, the division actively supervises approximately 400 low-risk and 2000 medium-risk offenders in the community. With only about 850 probationers enrolled in the Group Reporting Project, it can be safely assumed that group reporting is vastly underutilized as a supervision strategy, especially among medium-risk offenders. Based on the results of this study, medium-risk offenders appear more likely to benefit from the group reporting approach while on probation supervision, in terms of successful probation outcomes and reduced recidivism, than even low-risk offenders. In addition, expanding group reporting to higher medium-risk cases allows for the determination of cut-off scores based on actuarial risk assessment rather than conjecture. Shifting the focus of Group Reporting towards medium- and even higher-risk offenders, then, might result in bigger payoffs in terms of both offender outcomes and improved resource management.

Low-risk offenders, on the other hand, perform exceptionally well on probation supervision regardless of the supervision strategy employed. The results of this study indicated that there were no significant differences between low-risk Group Reporting participants and Comparisons in terms of successful terminations (both Group Reporting and Comparison groups exhibited 100% positive termination rates) or recidivism during probation supervision. Lower-risk offenders may, in fact, prove to do just as well in the community with even a less restrictive mode of supervision. Based on the existing research, caseload banking (Johnson et al, 2002) appears to be the most viable option for low-risk probationers, especially for very low risk cases. This design would provide differing levels of service in response to the offenders' unique risks and needs, as well as a mobile structure for the transfer of offenders between supervision levels and caseloads in response to their behavior while on supervision. Specifically, such an approach would initially require transfers of only limited and very low-risk probationers to a casebank caseload. As conceptualized, casebank officers would provide only minimal supervision (via telephone or group setting – as yet to be determined) and sporadic compliance reviews (record checks), thereby conserving division resources for those offenders who demonstrate a higher risk to re-offend. Such a plan would fit in well with the *Strategic Plan of Lake County (2008)*, which suggests: 1) the creation of a continuum of care by connecting opportunities for services and programming

during the course of offenders' experience in the criminal justice system, and 2) a continuum of interventions that assist in maximizing opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community.

Conclusions

In an era of expanding correctional populations and limited resources to manage these offenders through traditional means, correctional agencies must be pro-active in developing programming – treatment approaches and supervision techniques – that are equally responsive to the rehabilitative needs of offenders and to the safety of communities. Probation agencies, in particular, have not only seen dramatic increases in their caseloads over the past two decades, but are often charged with supervising higher-risk offenders within the community. These offenders often require greater supervision and treatment in order to reduce recidivism and successfully complete probation and than lower-risk offenders. If limited agency resources are to be directed where they can be most effective in supporting offender change, then agencies must learn to utilize assessments that appropriately distinguish higher- from lower-risk offenders and develop programming that is responsive to the needs of offenders based on that risk. The Lake County Group Reporting Project has demonstrated to be both an effective and efficient means of supervising low- and moderate-risk offenders in the community, so that the resources of the Division of Adult Probation can be successfully managed to address the needs of higher-risk offenders.

The efficiency and efficacy demonstrated by the Lake County Group Reporting Project is consistent with the values, goals and objectives of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court of Lake County as an organization, and the Division of Adult Probation Services as a direct provider responsible for the supervision and treatment of offenders residing in the community. Group Reporting impacts each of the standards of the 19th Judicial Circuit (2009) outlined in its strategic plan: *access to justice* (e.g., responsiveness to the needs of clients; and affordable client-costs in terms of time, money, and reasonable/fair procedures); *expedition and timeliness* (e.g., the processing of cases throughout the entire court system in a timely, efficient and effective manner); *equality, fairness and integrity* (e.g., an individualized approach to assuring compliance with the orders of the court); and *independence and accountability* (e.g., accountability for public resources, and the responsibility to change in response to evidence-based and best practices research). In terms of fulfilling these values, the Group Reporting Project is a model program for the 19th Judicial Circuit, and an example for programs throughout Lake County.

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Appendix A:
Group Reporting Presentation Topics

Category: Health

Topics: Physical Effects of Stress
Warning Signs of Health Issues
Locating Health Care
Good Nutrition
The Benefits of Exercise and Rest
Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Category: Substance Abuse

Topics: Alcohol Use
Drug Types and Use
Prescription Abuse
Effects on the Body
Determining if I Have a Problem
Consequences on Real Lives
Relapse Prevention & Recovery

Category: Life Skills I

Topics: Employment – Types and Where to Look
Resumes
Interviewing Skills
Moving Ahead in the Work Field
Education – GED; 1- & 2-Year Certificates; Colleges & Universities
Lifetime Learning Classes Available for Working Adults
English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes
Buying a Home
Budgeting
Time Management

Category: Life Skills II

Topics: Anger Management
Effective Communication
Social Skills
Stress Management
Assertiveness, Aggressiveness, and Passiveness
Choices and Consequences
Problem Solving
Counseling & Self-Help
Handling Grief
Stages of Grief
Motivation
Setting Personal Goals

Category: Relationships

- Topics: Living with Yourself – self-esteem, positive self-talk, assessing strengths and weaknesses; lifestyle questions
Living with Others – spouses, domestic partnerships, friends, parents; making the most of our time with others
Domestic Violence
Parenting
Work Relationships – co-workers, bosses, and others in the workplace

Category: Changing Behavior

- Topics: COG Concepts (Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies)
Thinking Errors
Making a Plan
Three Step (Choose – Plan – Do)
Thinking Reports
Overcoming Addictive Behavior
The Benefits of Changing Behavior
The Con Game (Games Criminals Play)

Category: Building Safer Communities

- Topics: Victims and Restitution
Keeping Our Children Safe
Amber Alerts
Voter Registration and Information
Resources in the Community
Community and Civic Organizations
Neighborhood Watches
Literacy
Public Service
Volunteering Opportunities
Interacting appropriately with the Police and other Public Servants
Participating in the Community