

Pre-Release Planning and Case Management

Assembly Bill 109 (AB-109) Funded

Program Overview

Reentry service navigation is important to ensure clients have a successful transition from incarceration to Probation supervision in the community and subsequent discharge from Probation. Connecting clients to services appropriate to meet their unique individual needs is critical to helping create positive avenues for reentry success. Reentry service specialists, or those with knowledge of a wide range of reentry services who help to guide clients to services and programs that match their individual needs may play an important role in ensuring clients receive the help they need.

In 2021, 98 PRCS clients were released from CDCR to the supervision of the Alameda County Probation Department, 105 clients were released to ACPD from the Santa Rita Jail and 3,785 clients were discharged from probation.¹

Program Elements

- **Pre-Release Reentry Navigation and Support:** Connecting clients to programs and services in the community they will return to while they are still in prison or jail, ahead of their release.
- **Post-Release Services for Clients on Probation:** Connecting clients to programs and services in the community they reside in while they are under probation supervision.
- **Probation Discharge Planning:** Connecting clients to programs and services in the community that will support their reentry success after the conclusion of their probation supervision.

Research on the Program Elements

Reentry refers to the process in which individuals exit prison or jail and return to their communities, and which poses numerous challenges (Callahan & Robinson, 2016; Stahler et al., 2013). This is partly because incarcerated individuals are exposed to a variety of criminogenic risk factors while incarcerated and are removed from social structures that can aid in discouraging further crime (Davis, 2003; Stahler et al., 2013; Stemen, 2016). As a result, those returning from a period of incarceration need a variety of supports during the transition from prison to community to live a successful, crime-free life (Callahan & Robinson, 2016; Stahler et al., 2013). This need for support includes the duration of time an individual is under probation supervision as well as after exiting supervision.

Pre-Release Reentry Navigation and Support

To help create a foundation for successful reentry, assessing an individual's specific needs and then connecting them to programs and services designed to address them from the point of incarceration forward is of critical importance (Reentry Programs, 2018). Reentry service specialists can play a crucial role in the process, from performing initial and ongoing assessments to help determine an individual's needs to then referring them to relevant services and supports while they are incarcerated (Murphy Healey, 1999; Warwick, Dodd, & Neusteter, 2012). Further, reentry service specialists can aid

¹As of 12/17/21. Paper commitment is also known as the court walk over process whereby PRCS clients who have already served their time in county jail when they get sentenced are released from jail to Probation.

in ensuring continuity of services by coordinating with both service providers within an individual's home community as well as with the agency responsible for providing an individual's post-release supervision (Murphy Healey, 1999; Warwick et al., 2012).

What ACPD is currently doing: The Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD) is a recipient of the Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) FY18 Innovations in Reentry Initiative: Reducing Recidivism Through Systems Improvement grant program. This funding has allowed ACPD, in partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), to implement *Redesigning the Pathways Home: Alameda County's Pilot to Positive Reentry* (Pathways Home), a program designed to reduce recidivism among high-risk clients returning to Alameda County from state prison by initiating case planning, service referrals, and reentry preparation for clients before they leave prison and continue that support through the probation supervision period. ACPD is the first probation department in the state to partner with CDCR to prepare clients for reentry before they leave prison.

Researchers at UC-Berkeley have been conducting an evaluation of the Pathways Home program and have examined the impact of pre-release video conferences (PRVCs) for post-release community supervision (PRCS) clients. The PRVC connects clients to support services before their release from prison and engages the client in a proactive, collaborative case-planning process with their Deputy Probation Officer. The evaluation findings show that clients who receive the PRVC are statistically significantly more likely to report to their DPO within 48 hours of release and to successfully complete probation as compared to a control group that did not receive a PRVC. In addition, clients who received a PRVC were less likely to receive a revocation.

Reentry services at the jail involve a collaboration between Alameda County Behavioral Health, the Sheriff's Department, Probation, and Social Services, and the number and types of services provided were expanded during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021 ACPD staff made over 300 referrals for clients pre-release to address their mental health, medical, housing, and other urgent needs. In addition, ACPD has worked in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department staff to establish access to perform the COMPAS risk and needs assessment to clients pre-release in order to ensure continuity of services to address clients' needs as they exit the jail to probation. Currently, DPOs are able to access these clients' COMPAS assessment, and in 2022 the clients' assessments will seamlessly integrate with the ACPD case management system.

Post-Release Services for Clients on Probation

Reentry services play a key role in ensuring individuals' success while under probation supervision. Because an individual's needs (e.g. for housing, employment, spiritual support, etc.) will change over the course of their reentry, supports for periodic, ongoing needs assessment and continual management of needs should be put in place (Zhang et al., 2019). Reentry support specialists can aid in this process by working with probation officers to help ensure that clients are being directed to relevant reentry services based on their specific identified needs (Murphy Healey, 1999; Warwick et al., 2012). Further, reentry support specialists who have an in-depth knowledge of services and programs pertaining to a specific need (e.g. reentry education services for a client with specific educational needs), can help determine which program or service may be the most appropriate and/or beneficial to an individual client.

Probation Discharge Planning

Discharge planning is used to describe the process of planning a person's leave from one modality of treatment back into their community of residence (Backer, Howard, & Moran, 2007). Discharge planning is used to help prepare individuals for post-treatment life by connecting them to the services and supports they will need when leaving the treatment setting (Backer et al., 2007). Discharge planning for probation involves connecting clients to services that can aid in addressing any needs that were not fully addressed while under supervision. Further, probation discharge planning should involve working to understand what barriers to accessing programs and services may exist (e.g. cost, transportation, availability, etc.) and determining how those barriers might be mitigated or overcome. Probation discharge planning can aid in helping ensure that gaps in services and/or treatment are minimized and that clients don't fall off a "cliff edge" – having no services and support following their discharge (Justice, 2021). These gaps in service or treatment provision when moving between periods of support can be detrimental to ensuring a smooth transition from a supervised to non-supervised setting and detract from the likelihood of successful reentry. Moreover, proper discharge planning prior to reentry through the assessment of client needs and the determination of service availability beyond a supervisions setting can provide critical structure and support as clients transition into the next their phase of their lives.

References

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