

RESEARCH BRIEF

SONOMA COUNTY PROBATION

February 2014

Effective Responses to Offender Behavior

A new report outlines lessons learned in the use of sanctions and incentives to promote and reinforce compliance among probationers and parolees. The report provides an overview of the research and rationale supporting swift and certain sanctions and incentives shown to be effective in community supervision, and then provides key lessons learned for the successful implementation of behavioral response strategies. This can help guide Sonoma County Probation's development of a sanctions/incentives policy and decision matrix, planned for the near future. Read the report here: <http://www.appa-net.org/eWeb/docs/APPA/pubs/EROBLLPPS-Report.pdf>

Key Principles from the Research:

- Swift and certain – swiftness helps the offender connect the response with the targeted behavior; certainty means the response is not a surprise because expectations are clear.
- Proportionality – responses should fit the seriousness of the behavior, be appropriate for the person's risk level, and take into account the frequency of the behavior.
- Incentives and rewards – both responses are necessary to reinforce positive behavior and reduce problem behavior.

Lessons Learned

- Consider legal and constitutional issues – assure that due process and separation of powers are preserved in the administrative sanctioning process.
- Apply proper ratio of incentives to sanctions – research indicates the number of incentives provided should be larger than the number of sanctions imposed during supervision.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders – engage them in the planning, development and implementation process to instill confidence in and support for the new supervision protocol.
- Develop a structured response grid using key principles – arrange behavioral responses based on seriousness of violations and risk to reoffend.
- Evaluate program fidelity and outcomes – demonstrate how well the model is being followed and examine how well it protects public safety, conserves resources, and contributes to the success of people on supervision.

VISIT THE APPA WEBSITE!

The report summarized in this Research Brief was sponsored in part by the American Probation & Parole Association (APPA).

Along with a wealth of other information of interest to probation professionals, the report can be found on the APPA website.

Check it out:

<https://www.appa-net.org/eweb/>