

RESEARCH BRIEF

SONOMA COUNTY PROBATION

January 2014

Does EPICS Work?

Probation recently implemented Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS), a correctional intervention with a solid foundation in corrections research. In a new study [*Targeting Antisocial Attitudes in Community Supervision Using the EPICS Model: An Examination of Change Scores on the Criminal Sentiment Scale*](#), researchers from the University of Cincinnati investigate how well a criminal thinking assessment identifies risk of reoffending, and the effect of EPICS on criminal thinking. Readers of this Brief may recognize two of the authors, Myrinda (Mindy) Schweitzer and Cara Thompson, trainers in Sonoma County's implementation of EPICS and Core Correctional Practices.

Study Design:

Randomly assign each moderate- and high-risk offender to either an officer trained in EPICS or one not trained in EPICS. Use the Criminal Sentiment Scale at first and last contact session to measure change in thinking, and check for a connection between criminal thinking and technical violations/rearrests during supervision. Compare the EPICS group with the non-EPICS group to see whether EPICS makes a difference with criminal thinking.

Study Findings:

- One dimension of the Criminal Sentiment Scale (Identification with Criminal Others) was found to have strong correlation with reoffending. The other two dimensions (Attitudes toward the Law, Courts and Police and Tolerance for Law Violations) were not correlated strongly with reoffending.
- EPICS was found to make a substantial difference in the Identification with Criminal Others and Tolerance of Law Violations dimensions of the Criminal Sentiment Scale, increasing confidence that EPICS "works."

[Click here to read the study](#)

WHAT IS EPICS?

The EPICS model targets higher-risk offenders, teaches officers how to target criminogenic needs during a structured meeting, and teaches officers how to use a cognitive-behavioral approach during brief meetings.

The model trains community supervision officers on several core correctional practices related to service delivery with offender populations and includes a structured approach to coaching and fidelity monitoring.