Offender Substance Abuse Report
CORRECTIONS • COURTS • TREATMENT • LAW

Police Perspective

Catching Criminals Is One Thing; Releasing Them Is Another

by Burke Brownfeld

When I was an Alexandria police officer, I spent my days navigating rough neighborhoods and hunting down wanted felons. I caught the 14-year-old kid who had just shot another teenager in the head, killing him. My partner and I tracked down a man who sodomized his daughter. But when I reflect back on my time as a cop, the most gratifying parts of the job were not the chases or high-profile arrests.

During our regular duties, we often had casual conversations with the men and women whom we transported to jail. These discussions would lead to the prisoner explaining the struggles of drug addiction or other personal reflections. I noticed that, when we dropped off prisoners at the jail, they often would thank us. Finally, I stopped one man after he thanked me and asked, "I don't get it. I just arrested you. What are you thanking me for?" The man replied, "Thank you for treating me like a man."

That one sentence was the most meaningful moment in my police

Responding to the Needs of Probation and Parole: The Development of the Effective Practices in a Community Supervision Model With Families

by Ryan M. Labrecque, Jennifer D. Luther, Paula Smith, and Edward J. Latessa

At the present time, the *principles of effective correctional intervention* provide the dominant paradigm for offender rehabilitation (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). These principles are the result of the ongoing effort to cumulate knowledge about "what works" in reducing offender recidivism (Smith, 2013). To illustrate, there are now 100 meta-analyses of the literature, and the basic findings have been replicated with remarkable consistency (McGuire, 2013). At the core of this paradigm are the principles of risk, need, and responsivity (RNR), which indicate that the greatest reductions in recidivism are achieved when offender treatment is cognitive-behavioral in nature (*general responsivity principle*) and targets the criminogenic needs (*need principle*) of the highest-risk offenders (*risk principle*) in a manner that is conducive to the individual learning style, motivation,

abilities, and strengths of the offender (*specific responsivity principle*).

Despite the fact that stronger adherence to the RNR framework has been associated with more dramatic reductions in recidivism ($r = -0.02$ for adherence to no principles and $r = 0.26$ for adherence to all three principles; Andrews & Bonta, 2010), research suggests that these principles are not yet widely applied in community supervision settings (Bonta et al., 2008). Rather, it has been observed that the primary focus of many probation and parole agencies remains on compliance monitoring and other law enforcement aspects of offender supervision (Taxman, 2002). This focus is rather unfortunate, given that it has been well documented that sanctions (e.g., intensive supervision) have no appreciable effects on recidivism,

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and in some cases actually increase recidivism (MacKenzie, 2006; Petersilia & Turner, 1993; Sherman et al., 1997). What is more, recent evaluations on the effectiveness of community supervision have concluded that neither probation (Bonta et al., 2008) nor parole services (Solomon, 2006) were effective in reducing recidivism as currently implemented.

In response to these findings, there has been a growing movement to change the way that probation and parole agencies deliver services to offenders (Burrell, 2012). This initiative encourages community corrections agencies to move beyond simply monitoring offenders for compliance with the conditions of supervision and to instead focus on "what works" in reducing recidivism (Bourgon et al., 2012). In order to help agencies with this transition, several formalized approaches have been developed to teach probation and parole officers how to structure their face-to-face interactions with offenders using evidence-based practices (Bonta et al., 2011; Bourgon & Gutierrez, 2012; Raynor et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Taxman, 2008; Taxman et al., 2004; Taxman et al., 2006; Trotter, 1996; 2006; Trotter & Evans, 2012).

Effective Practices in Community Supervision

One of these new approaches—the Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS) model—was developed by Paula Smith and Chris Lowenkamp (2008) and has been revised by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI). Currently, there are 84 state and county juvenile and adult community supervision agencies in 23 states and one from Singapore that have been trained by the University of Cincinnati in the EPICS model. The purpose of the EPICS model is to teach community supervision officers how to restructure the content of their face-to-face interactions with offenders in order to better adhere to the principles of effective correctional intervention. Specifically, this model encourages officers to increase the intervention dosage of treatment to the higher-risk offenders, to focus on criminogenic needs, and to use a cognitive-behavioral approach in their interactions with offenders. These new initiatives also seek to improve officer use of core correctional practices (CCPs), which are the skills that have been empirically shown to increase the therapeutic potential of an intervention (Dowden & Andrews, 2004). Inherent in

each of these new models is the belief that stronger adherence to the CCPs will result in lower levels of recidivism.

The EPICS model implementation begins with a three-day training event, which covers:

- An introduction to the rationale and development of the model;
- A review of the structure of the model (i.e., check-in, review, intervention, and homework);
- A discussion of the importance of the officer-offender relationship (i.e., relationship skills); and
- Lessons on intervention techniques (e.g., cognitive restructuring, problem solving, and structured learning) and behavioral practices (i.e., anticriminal modeling, effective reinforcement, effective disapproval, and effective use of authority).

The format of the training includes visual presentations, demonstrations of skills, workbook and participation exercises, and several opportunities for officers to practice skills. In addition to the initial training, officers must also participate in five coaching sessions (one per month). These sessions are designed to refresh officers on the EPICS model and

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include reviews of the various intervention techniques and behavioral practices.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of EPICS

It has been well documented that the effectiveness of any treatment program diminishes if careful attention is not paid to how the program is implemented in the "real world" (Gendreau et al., 1999). In an effort to improve fidelity to the EPICS model, officers must audio-record some of their interactions with the offenders whom they supervise. The University of Cincinnati research team then evaluates officer performance using a standardized rating form. Officers are then given written feedback on their performance using the EPICS Officer Rating Form in order to highlight the areas in which the officer did well and the areas in which the officer

trained officers were statistically more likely to use CCPs than the untrained officers (Labrecque et al., 2013b). In addition, there were two more important discoveries made in this study:

1. Offenders supervised by officers who used CCPs more proficiently (i.e., high-fidelity officers) recidivated at a lower rate than those offenders supervised by officers who used CCPs less proficiently (i.e., low-fidelity officers; Latessa et al., 2012); and

2. Although the model worked well for all groups of offenders, it was more effective in reducing the probability for recidivism for high-risk versus moderate-risk offenders (Latessa et al., 2012).

Investigations of other theoretically relevant intermediate measures indicate several distinct advantages of the EPICS model over traditional probation and parole services. First, offenders

opinions of EPICS-trained officers in the pilot site in order to determine what aspects of the model they felt worked well and what aspects they felt needed improvement. These conversations with officers and supervisors revealed two issues:

1. Many of the interactions between the officers and offenders tended to occur in the offender's home, and officers expressed difficulty in conducting EPICS sessions in the field, as opposed to the office setting; and

2. Officers also expressed a concern that progress made through EPICS was often lost when the offender's family did not use a similar approach in dealing with the offender.

This feedback led to the development of the Effective Practices in Community Supervision with Families (EPICS with Families) model. This approach expands on the traditional EPICS model by incorporating elements of family-based interventions (Dowden & Andrews, 2003; Henggeler et al., 2009; Sexton, 2010), relapse prevention (Dowden et al., 2003), and contingency management (Spiegler & Guevremont, 2010). The intent of this new approach is to train family members on the components of the model in order to maximize the officer's efforts at encouraging positive offender change (i.e., reduced recidivism).

In order to be trained in the EPICS with Families model, it is a prerequisite that officers have first been trained in EPICS. Once deemed eligible for participation, officers must identify an offender and his or her family to work with during the training process. Officers are encouraged to select offenders and families who are motivated to participate during the coaching process, so that officers can gain knowledge and skills before focusing on the challenges of higher-risk participants (Speck, 1996).

There are four phases to the EPICS with Families implementation process. The first phase begins with a two-day classroom-training event, followed by live coaching sessions. The first coaching sessions involve family visits in the home, where the coach delivers the session and the officer observes. Supervisors should attend all home visits, as they will become the coaches after training is complete. Each site visit begins with a discussion of the intent of the session. After

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needs to improve. The areas for improvement serve as the topic(s) for the coaching sessions.

There have been several evaluations of the EPICS model to date, each of which has sought to examine various aspects of its effectiveness. The original EPICS model was first pilot tested in 2007 in a Midwestern probation department. An investigation of this project revealed that EPICS-trained officers demonstrated a more consistent use of CCPs compared to untrained officers (Smith et al., 2012). What is more, the trained officers were significantly more likely than untrained officers to spend time during offender interactions targeting criminogenic needs (Smith et al., 2012).

More recently, the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services sponsored a multi-site outcome evaluation of the EPICS model in four jurisdictions in Ohio (Latessa et al., 2012). In this study, 41 probation and parole officers submitted a total of 755 audiotape recordings of the interactions with 272 probationers and parolees whom they supervise (Latessa et al., 2012). Evaluations of these audiotapes revealed that

supervised by EPICS-trained officers are more likely to have positive (reduced) scores of antisocial thinking at post-test when compared to offenders supervised by untrained officers (Labrecque et al., 2013c). Second, offenders supervised by high-fidelity EPICS officers are more likely to perceive a positive offender-officer relationship (Labrecque et al., 2013a). Finally, officer coaching has an incremental benefit in improving officer use of skills over time (Labrecque & Smith, 2014). In sum, the research on EPICS to date has been encouraging and should be viewed as general support for the model. However, it should also be noted that these evaluations, in conjunction with officer feedback and the lessons learned from implementation, have been instrumental in the ongoing improvements of the model.

Effective Practices in Community Supervision With Families

In an attempt to produce only the most well-informed and effective model, staff from the University of Cincinnati purposely encouraged the feedback and

session delivery, coaching participants debrief the session and discuss intervention content and interaction style.

During the second phase, the coach observes the officer deliver an EPICS with Families session, while the coach uses a standardized coding sheet to assess officer fidelity and skill. Immediately following the session, the coach provides the officer with feedback on his or her performance, while the supervisor observes all elements.

The third phase involves officer delivery of the session with the supervisor serving as the coach and the University of Cincinnati coach observing the entire process. After the session, the supervisor provides the officer with feedback on his or her performance. After the officer's portion is complete, the University of Cincinnati coach provides individual feedback to the supervisor on his or her performance in a coaching role.

In the final phase, supervisors take on the sole responsibility of coach. The number of sessions involved in each phase depends largely on the ability of the officer and the supervisor to show proficiency in delivering the EPICS with Families skills. Finally, quarterly follow-up booster sessions provide additional support that officers and supervisors will continue to adhere to the model over time.

Feedback From the Pilot

In 2011, the University of Cincinnati piloted the EPICS with Families model in a regional juvenile parole agency in the state of Ohio. During the pilot, six parole officers were trained to deliver the intervention. In addition, a supervisor was trained to continue the coaching process after one-on-one trainings were completed. The feedback obtained from officers, supervisor, offenders, and family members involved in this initial study was positive. Family member satisfaction surveys revealed changes in the view of the role of the probation officer from someone who was trying to catch the offender doing something wrong, to someone who was there to help the offender and his or her family. Officers and supervisors also noted that EPICS with Families gave offenders and their family members the knowledge and power to work out and solve their own problems.

Based on the success of the pilot project, the EPICS with Families model has subsequently been implemented in all five of the Ohio Department of Youth Service (ODYS) parole regions, as well as in three additional Ohio county juvenile probation departments. It should be noted that although the EPICS with Families model has so far only been adopted by agencies supervising juvenile offenders, it is designed for use with both juvenile and adult offenders.

The University of Cincinnati is currently involved in a large-scale formal outcome evaluation of the model in these jurisdictions. While the data for this investigation is collected, however, there are several reasons to expect that the results of this study will indicate that the model is effective in reducing recidivism. First, the evaluations of EPICS, as well as other similar RNR models of supervision—which come from several jurisdictions in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia—indicate a wide range of positive outcomes, including the reduction of recidivism. (For a recent review of the empirical literature of these models, see Trotter, 2012.) It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that EPICS with Families will have at least the same level of influence on recidivism as the other RNR models, and given the additional components therein, it may even lead to a greater impact on recidivism.

Second, there is meta-analytic support that suggests that other cognitive-behavioral family interventions (e.g., Multisystemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy) are effective in reducing recidivism (Curtis et al., 2004), especially when "competent" therapists deliver the interventions (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2004). To this point, in order to ensure officer fidelity to the model, EPICS with Families uses a wide range of quality assurance mechanisms (i.e., observations, standardized rating

forms, and booster sessions). This focus on competent delivery of proven strategies increases the chances that the model will be successful in reducing recidivism.

Third, one of the key distinctions between the EPICS with Families model and its predecessors is that the model seeks to train the offender's family members (e.g., parents and significant others) as support therapists. Research shows that relapse prevention programs that trained significant others and family members in cognitive-behavioral approaches were three times as effective as programs that did not (Dowden et al., 2003). Again, this is another clear advantage of the EPICS with Families model over the other RNR approaches to community supervision.

Fourth, an extensive body of research supports the efficacy of contingency management in changing antisocial behavior (Gendreau et al., 2014), especially when the number of reinforcers outweighs the punishers at a ratio of

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Officers and supervisors also noted that EPICS with Families gave offenders and their family members the knowledge and power to work out and solve their own problems.

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four to one (Gendreau, 1996). By working collaboratively with family members and offenders toward agreed-on goals, EPICS with Families increases the likelihood that families will use a contingency management plan more consistently at home, which should result in more positive, long-term results.

Conclusion

In the last decade, there has been a growing movement to incorporate the "what works" literature into the community supervision settings, and the evaluations of these new approaches to date have been encouraging. One of these new models of supervision, EPICS, has displayed a wide range of positive outcomes (Labrecque et al., 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; Labrecque & Smith, 2014; Latessa et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012). However, in an effort to respond to the needs of probation and parole agencies, the EPICS pilot

project (Smith et al., 2012) revealed two issues: (1) officers expressed difficulty in using the EPICS skills in the field, and (2) there was a missed opportunity of not formally involving family members in the offender's treatment plan. These insights—coupled with information drawn from several diverse literature bases (i.e., family-based interventions, relapse prevention, and contingency management)—led to the development of the EPICS with Families model. In this way, EPICS with Families is not only built on a foundation of evidence-based practice but is informed by firsthand practical experience in the field. Taken together, the research on RNR models of supervision (Trotter,

> ## *Relapse prevention programs that trained significant others and family members in cognitive-behavioral approaches were three times as effective as programs that did not.*

2012), family-based interventions (Curtis et al., 2004, Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2004), relapse prevention (Dowden et al., 2003), and contingency management (Gendreau et al., 2014) suggest that the EPICS with Families model will be effective in reducing recidivism. The true test of the effectiveness of this model, however, will be in the forthcoming empirical evaluation.

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- Require public investment for sustaining intersystem collaborations that achieve realistic reentry and public safety outcomes;
- Reframe community corrections officer roles to enable them to guide offenders with necessary control, support, and treatment;
- Review the unintended consequences of legislation in affecting outcomes for offenders in community corrections;
- Develop clear community corrections mission statements and practice goals;
- Develop a reliable network of evidence-based practice providers, reduce administrative tasks, enhance information sharing, and implement participatory management;
- Evaluate measures that emphasize the prosocial completion of supervision, which can lead to reducing recidivism, revocations, and prison readmissions;
- Manage offender risks through evidence-based practices;
- Increase community corrections officers' professional liability;
- Reduce caseloads to allow boundary-spanning activities;
- Empower community corrections, as a human rights issue, to build and sustain social capital in its work with community stakeholders;
- Focus on problem-solving approaches that develop healthy communities;
- Implement a continuum of care that covers offenders' entire process of change; and
- Explore justice reinvestment potential for reentry efforts in communities with high rates of concentrated incarceration.

The importance of these recommendations lies within the context of the professional lives of community corrections officers. Lutze finds that community corrections officers, as boundary spanners:

are able to provide services or connect offenders with a ready list of treatment providers, employers, and community resource centers. They oftentimes share contacts, use existing professional relationships to expedite services, and direct offenders to people and places where they are most likely to be successful and least likely to be rejected because of their criminal record. In order to connect the right offender to the appropriate services, community corrections officers need to know the offender's life circum-

Getting to know offenders and managing their risks and needs is nearly impossible when a caseload size dictates short, superficial meetings focused on case management.

stances and what challenges need to be resolved to gain compliance and successful reintegration.

Still, Lutze concludes that community corrections officers "often feel overwhelmed by the size of their caseloads and the demands placed on them to justify their decisions and activities. Getting to know offenders and managing their risks and needs is nearly impossible when a caseload size dictates short, superficial meetings focused on case management instead of criminogenic needs and other issues related to solving life issues." ∎