Technology in the 21st Century Probation Milieu: Some Assembly Required

John T. Rivers

Abstract

Overcrowding of offenders in the community is a dilemma faced by probation agencies throughout the nation. The 21ST century is several years away and planning is needed to effectively manage excessive caseloads in order to protect the public. This paper reviews a fresh means of supervision methodology and the joining of the prevailing technology and the imminent technology of the 21ST century.

The paper also takes a glance at a number of technological devices, tools and innovative methods, that would assist probation officers in the supervision of offenders, which are being tested in Florida by the Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole Services. The groundwork is laid out for the future for caseload management. Managers and staff need to determine the route to take in this venture of technology into the 21ST century so that the citizenry is safe and appropriate intervention techniques are utilized with offenders on community supervision.

Introduction

For quite some time there has been a public, political and a media demand to lock up offenders for a maximum period of time. Even with this stringent constraint on the criminal justice system to incarcerate, rather than treat offenders, alternative sentencing continues with the majority of offenders being supervised within the community. Of all the offenders convicted, one fourth to one third are sentenced to incarceration and two thirds to three fourths are supervised in communities, according to research of Mullaney and Fulton (1995) and the research findings of Ellsworth (1992).

Officers in various probation agencies throughout the United States supervise a general caseload based on territorial or geographic boundaries, as pointed out by the findings of Boswell, Davis, and Wright (1993). With the exception of specialized caseloads, such as sex offenders, drug offenders, and house arrest cases, caseloads are mixed, regardless of their risk to the community or their needs. Due to the high number of cases throughout the country, supervision of cases in the community has been on a crisis need basis, rather than planned effective supervision and intervention.

It is clear why the public, politicians and the media are not satisfied with the way offenders are managed in the community. The number of offenders in the community has not and will not diminish. New supervision techniques are needed to circumvent the problem of case management, especially with the downsizing of probation agencies and the tendency to do more with less.

Ellsworth (1992) reflects that over many years the probation field has undergone many changes to meet the demands of the policy makers, who have been driven by the

public. He points out that critics question the effectiveness of community corrections and that strategies are needed to protect the community and at the same time meet the needs of offenders.

Soma (1994) reflected on an innovative approach to caseload supervision in his discussion of a triage means of supervising cases in Minnesota. This approach utilizes a variety of technology tools to accomplish the goals of supervision. Morgan and Marrs (1994) described a unique way to better supervise cases in the community by a partnership with police agencies to help probation officers supervise cases in the community. These blueprints of supervision techniques can service probation agencies throughout the country to better meet the demands of accountable control of offenders in the community, and service offenders to meet their needs. Further, successful accomplishment of the goals of community supervision can be met by marrying other technological advances, both those currently available and those technological innovations on the horizon of the 21ST century.

Until recently, probation agencies have not experienced many of the technological advances that other public sector agencies have experienced. There has been some use of computer technology and electronic monitoring according to studies and research by Lilly, Ball, Curry, and McMullen (1993), Quinn and Hollman (1992), and Glaser and Watts (1992). Electronic monitoring use has been limited to offenders on house arrest supervision, which provides the officer with electronic reports indicating that the offender has left the range of his or her residence for unauthorized activities.

With increased use of technology by the private sector, probation agencies are now researching the applications of new tools and innovations. Included are a variety of computer based technologies, such as voice activation, bar coding, imaging, virtual reality, telecommunications and scanning. Throughout Florida, according to R. Nimer (personal communication, 1996), technological innovations are being piloted for future use. These include electronic reporting by offenders, a computer based risk/needs classification system, eye recognition and skin patch recognition drug testing, voice identification electronic monitoring and satellite surveillance electronic monitoring.

There is an entourage of a technological menu for probation agencies to choose from. What agency personnel must keep in mind is how to best fit these technologies within a budgetary framework, as well as philosophical and physical parameters. At the same time they need to think outside of the usual paradigm of reasoning and imagine creatively in order to determine the most cost effective and efficient means of case management of offenders.

Methods

The project began with an extensive literature review focused on the role of the probation officer in the past, present and what the role may be in the future. Coupled with the search for data on the role of the probation officer was an extensive hunt for technology with connectivity to the tasks, duties and responsibilities of the officer in community supervision.

In September, 1995, the Florida Department of Corrections presented a statewide training workshop specifically for probation and parole staff. One of the training tracks concentrated on future technology and the presenters of this track were later interviewed for this project.

The technology presenters were queried on the available technology, what technology is going to be available, what the Department of Corrections' financial commitment to technology is, and what the practical applications and implications of the technology are. The presenters were able to provide names of additional persons who could provide more details and ideas regarding the uses of technology.

Management and staff from probation agencies, including Orange County, U.S. Probation and Florida Department of Corrections, were interviewed for their ideas on the uses of technology and the management of cases. The persons interviewed provided names of technological experts, who were also sought and questioned.

Two authors of articles, discovered during the literature review, were interviewed by telephone for more elaborate explanation and details of their articles, pertaining to innovative methods of community supervision utilizing technology. They also provided more extensive written material to embellish what they had written in their articles.

Finally the Internet was reviewed for the current technological innovations. The material located was scrutinized for the practical applications of technology for probation agencies, coupled with caseload supervision methods.

Results

What was sought, investigated and researched was not found as originally planned. The original focus of the project was on what the role of the probation officer would be, based on the driving force of technology. Instead the outcome of the research was locating a method to better supervise offenders in the community, using a blueprint for caseload management. The technological innovations, merchandise, and methods found during the literature review, interviews and researching Internet, were well suited to fit within the blueprint for caseload management of community offender supervision for probation agencies, especially Florida Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole Services.

The probation officers and managers of the Central Florida area, who were interviewed, reflected that the direction of the probation officer of the future is that of a more mobile based officer, working in the community to conduct surveillance, investigations and supervision of offenders. The move is away from officers coming into an office each day; rather their homes will become their office base. The communication between management and staff will be conducted by telecommunications from the officers' cars and home base.

Although the general public is aware of prison overcrowding, the public is not aware of community offender caseload overcrowding. Nationwide, the results of probation overcrowding include watered down surveillance and decreased services and treatment. There is constant debate and arguing that there should be a range of sanctions available to criminal justice agencies, which are more stringent than regular

probation, yet less severe than incarceration (Ellsworth, 1992). The following outlines of community supervision, merged with piloted technologies in Florida and technologies on the border of the 21ST century may assist in accomplishing community supervision in a proficient mode.

Discussion

In areas throughout the nation, the cases receiving ongoing attention are those so identified by the sentencing authority. Included in this group of intensive supervision are sex offenders, drug offenders, habitual criminals, house arrest cases and most recently, domestic violence offenders. Those the sentencing authority deems as administrative probation and those designated as regular probation have predominantly been supervised on a crisis need basis or inadvertently ignored.

Community Supervision in Minnesota

Caseload supervision in Minnesota seemingly addresses the issue of how to better manage the administrative probation cases, regular probation cases and those needing intensive supervision, without sacrificing any of the aspects of community supervision for the others (Soma, 1994). As in some other locations in the United States, Anoka County, Minnesota has opted to utilize a triage means of caseload management.

All cases undergo an intake process that includes a risk/needs assessment of the offender. An orientation to supervision is provided and the conditions of their supervision are explained, once it is determined which aspect of the triage supervision the offender fits. The supervision parameters are programmed into a computer data base to assist staff in caseload management (Soma, 1994).

The low risk offender does not report again to an officer, staff or even to an office once the initial orientation is completed. The offender sends in reports, pays monetary obligations, fulfills volunteer work, makes treatment appointments and complies with other verifiable conditions of supervision. If the computer generated data indicate that an offender is in violation of conditions, staff of the probation agency in Minnesota are alerted and the staff refer the violator back to the sentencing authority to process revocation of supervision procedures (Soma, 1994).

The second aspect of triage supervision in Minnesota is group reporting. When the offender is assessed to fit this category, at initial contact with probation staff, the case is given a computer generated contract. The person on supervision then reports monthly to a probation center (Soma, 1994).

The appointments are designated by the computer data base so that there are no overlapping appointments should each case reporting need to make contact with a probation officer. Not each offender reporting to the center has a requirement to make contact with the probation officers on duty. Some are designated to attend the educational session only. Those, who do make contact with a probation officer, are designated to, based on review of the offender's file and data contained in the computer data base. If the offender requests to make contact with an officer, the meeting is usually arranged (Soma, 1994).

The final aspect of triage caseload management is intensive supervision of high risk offenders. This intensive supervision of the offenders is comparable to most intensive supervision programs of probation agencies throughout the country. As Gendreau, Cullen and Bonta (1994) found in their research, intensive supervision for the sake of surveillance and contacts only is no more effective than the crisis intervention supervision of regular probation cases. Provision of intensive treatment and services are necessary components for successful management of high risk cases.

In Minnesota, the cases supervised in the intensive supervision program are contacted extensively in a variety of phases of intensity. As the offender reaches each phase, the contacts with the case are lessened. Coupled with the surveillance and contacts is a focus on treatment to meet the offender's needs. Intervention (treatment and services to the offender), surveillance (monitoring offender activity), and enforcement (holding offender accountable for actions) are integral components of this aspect of triage supervision (Soma, 1994).

Community Supervision in Washington

Washington State Department of Corrections has developed a unique partnership with the Redmond, Washington Police Department, which may enhance the intensive supervision component of triage caseload management. The program is called Supervision Management and Recidivist Tracking- S.M.A.R.T. The program is virtually cost-free and it has benefited both agencies by efficiently and closely monitoring high risk offenders in the community (Morgan & Marrs, 1994).

The police officers in Redmond document any contact they have with offenders on supervision. The police, Department of Corrections and the prosecutor's office are linked with a computer network data base to communicate with one another. Police officers are assigned to monitor cases of the Washington State Department of Corrections. The contact documentation is relayed over the computer system to the probation officer, who in turn takes appropriate action on the case (Morgan & Marrs, 1994).

This partnering with law enforcement frees the probation officer to provide more time to rehabilitative/treatment functions of supervision of offenders in the community. The police monitoring of offenders, coupled with case management by probation staff, is an effective tool to get the offender, who is in noncompliance of supervision conditions, incarcerated and at the same time, to successfully supervise the offender, who is in compliance with the conditions of supervision, to a positive outcome of treatment and termination from caseload management (Morgan & Marrs, 1994).

Utilization of Technologies in Community Supervision

These two frameworks of caseload management have been successful in their locales, as reported by management and staff utilizing these methods of supervision of offenders. The methods are also relatively new and are being scrutinized for their overall effectiveness. They both appear to be adaptable in other locales, including in Florida by the Department of Corrections. Some technological methods and tools have been used to undertake the tasks of caseload management in Minnesota and Washington, but there are additional technologies, being used in the private sector, those being piloted by the

Department of Corrections and those technological innovations in the range of vision in the future.

As Haavind (1993) and Burris (1994) have stated, it is extremely important for decision makers to know what technologies are around the corner of the future and how these methods, tools, and innovations might be used for distinct purposes. Benchmarking needs to be the means of fitting the technology with the method of accomplishing tasks. Additionally, technology needs to be approached in a similar manner simple tools of the past were adapted, by learning about them ,and most crucial, by using them. Therefore, the technology of the present and the near future can not be ignored, as technology is the current age(such as the industrial age of the recent past) and the age of the future.

Probation officers and administrators of agencies in Florida have stated that they are attuned to the technology of the present and avidly interested in the technology of the future. Some of the technologies that pique their interest, though they are not being utilized by their agencies, include imaging, bar coding, virtual reality and video conferencing. Imaging and bar coding fit readily into the intake processes of the Minnesota caseload management framework, as they would in the intake process of agencies in Florida.

Imaging technology would assist those who initially process the offender by providing a time-saving means of entering more accurate identifying data on the supervised offender into the computer data base. Photos and fingerprints can be obtained from booking offices in jail facilities by computer network linkage. This process would save staff time and work during the initial intake process.

Bar coding technology could be used to better track files on the cases on supervision, as well as providing identification cards for the offender to be used when the offender reports to the assigned probation offices. The cards could be utilized to process court ordered monetary obligation payments.

Virtual reality technology can be applied to cases on community supervision, as well as to staff of probation agencies. The offender can be referred to a treatment vendor to administer the technology to change certain behaviors, including alcohol and drug abuse. Staff of probation agencies can benefit from virtual reality technology by placing staff in simulated scenarios that they would confront in the real world of community supervision. The staff could determine methods of street survival without being placed in the actual dangerous situation. This has possible implications for other criminal justice agencies, as well. Although not under any current pilot project, the Florida Department of Corrections staff are reviewing the possibility of future use of this technology.

Video conferencing (developed in Florida through a distance learning network) allows staff to communicate with one another, as well as other agencies similarly equipped. As this technology is further developed, officers in the field will be able to communicate with administrators and both can see one another on respective monitors. (L.Dumas personal communication, 1995). This would coincide with the findings of the interviews with officers and management in various probation agencies, especially with

the mobile officer concept. This technology would be suitable in the intensive supervision aspect of triage management of community supervision cases.

The distance network linkage can be not only used for video conferencing, but also as a training tool for staff and for offenders. Staff can receive all types of training by traveling to a link up site relatively close to their locale. This would allow probation agency personnel to receive the latest training with the minimal amount of time and travel. Offenders too could receive life skills training at the link up sites, especially those in the group reporting aspect of triage supervision (L. Dumas personal communication, 1995).

Another technological device that can assist the probation officer and other criminal justice staff is the hand held millimeter-wave-camera that would detect weapons within twelve feet. This device has implications in the office setting to prevent weapons from being brought in by offenders who are required to report to probation offices and centers. The device can also assist officers who make contacts with cases in the intensive supervision aspect of triage caseload management by helping them to determine how to approach persons in the community, based on whether or not they have possession of a weapon.

To further assist the officer in the community, there are technological instruments to provide improved vision at night. These include viewers, pocket scopes, low light illuminators and image intensifiers. These devices would give officers a clearer image of the environment that they would travel in to contact offenders. Another tool would enable the probation officer to escape a life threatening situation by the use of a canister that provides a thirty second blinding light to the persons initiating the situation.

Other technological tools, devices, innovations are being thought of, tested, and implemented each moment of every day. These are available for the scrutiny of all criminal agencies through private companies, National Institute of Justice and the military through piloting products for future application by the respective agency.

Florida Department of Corrections Pilot Projects

The Florida Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole Services, has undertaken the task of piloting a variety of new technology to better supervise cases in the community. The first is a computer based risk/needs classification system, which can be adapted for triage supervision placement of offenders (R.Nimer personal communication,1996).

For the pilot project of the risk/needs classification system, certain already known high risk cases are automatically determined to be high risk as these will be managed as intensive supervision cases. These include sex offenders, habitual and violent career offenders, post-prison releases, drug offender probationers, level eight and above sentencing guidelines offenses, and community control (house arrest) cases. Additionally administrative cases, deemed by sentencing authority, did not need to be assessed by this system. They would be appropriate for the low risk aspect of triage supervision of cases (R. Nimer personal communication, 1996).

The management information system currently being utilized by the Department of Corrections will be the system used for the risk/needs classification of community supervision cases. Software added to the system will predict the probability of risk to

the community and designate whether the case is a low, medium or high risk supervision case. The computer generated risk designation determines the type and magnitude of contact needed with the case in the community. The intervention needs of the offender are also determined and the case would be managed accordingly, R. Nimer(personal communication, 1996).

This system of risk/needs assessment can be adapted to the triage system used in Minnesota. The three classifications match those supervision aspects of triage management of cases and places the community supervision case in a position to have the needs met within the aspect of triage supervision.

There are two voice tracking systems being reviewed by personnel with the Department of Corrections in pilot projects in two locations in Florida. One of the systems utilizes computer equipment in the probation office to call the offender at home and the employment site to verify claimed location of the offender. The offender upon initial intake, after being placed on community supervision, speaks into recording equipment by reciting numbers. The computer then randomly calls the offender at locations, based on provided schedules, which can be modified within a short period of notification. The computer requires the case to repeat various numbers and the voice print of the call is compared to the intake voice print of numbers, previously recited by the offender, to verify if it is the offender answering the call. The system is also able to determine if the respondent is a prerecorded voice or a real person(R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

The other system is somewhat different in that the computer base headquarters is located in another state. The headquarters computer station sends the information about the offender, not responding to signals, to the computer data base of the probation agency. The offender is also paged on a beeper, rather than at a phone number of the offender's locale. If the offender is not able to afford a beeper or there are no funds to provide the beeper by the probation agency, the offender is given a schedule of times to call in by the officer, which can be modified at time intervals determined by the officer. The system is able to determine the location of the offender and verify the identity of the offender who called, based on previous intake recording and voice printing of the case (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

These voice tracking systems take telecommunications technology a step further than previously discussed. Additionally, the cost factor can be passed on to the offender. The voice tracking company is willing to bill the offender directly, bypassing the need for additional probation agency staff to bill, collect and take action on non-paying offenders (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

The voice tracking systems can be used in all aspects of triage supervision and they are highly recommended for low risk cases, since there is no contact with the offenders in the Minnesota system. This allows probation agencies, which are highly accountable for cases in the community, to have better control of the offender population. The systems allow for designing the calls to offenders, based on up to six risk/needs levels.

Another technological pilot project in Florida is electronic reporting to a kiosk located in the lobby of a probation office. Offenders would at intake be registered into

the data base with personal information and fingerprint imagery placed on a plastic identification card. The offender then reports to the office regularly to an automated machine- the kiosk- and inserts the identification card and the finger used for the fingerprint imagery (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

The touch screen will have a report that the case would respond to, and the offender would not have to contact the officer unless there was an on screen message on the kiosk to do so. The questions on the screen can be individually designed for each supervision case. Officers can add instructions to the individual's reporting screen to attend classes, receive treatment and an unlimited array of directions (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

Routine reporting can be applied, as well as enhanced reporting. The enhanced reporting could include cases released pending violation proceedings. Offenders who do not make a diligent effort to locate employment could be required to report each day the sites where employment was sought. Enhanced reporting could also be used for offenders who test positive for drug usage, offenders who are court ordered to report frequently to the kiosk and for sex offenders when there is information that the case may re-offend, and for a variety of other rationale (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

According to Neel (1995) other options can be added to the system. The kiosk can be equipped with an alcohol breath sensor, a video recorder to record offender interaction with the kiosk, a credit card reader to accept court ordered obligations and numerous other applications left to the imagination of probation staff and technocrats.

The kiosk can be used during all three risk/needs levels of triage management of offenders. Again, it is recommended for the low risk administrative case to further enhance control of the offender and reduce liability risk to the community. If there is an active warrant on the offender, whether violation of supervision or new offense, the kiosk would alert the officer that the offender is in the lobby and the case could be apprehended.

The kiosk frees the probation officer from routine office visits with the offender and officer generated enhanced reporting. The officer is better able to make contact with the case in the community, enabling the probation staff to protect the general public through monitoring and surveillance of the case. The officer also is able to appropriately coordinate treatment of the offender and help the case to be more established in the work force.

The next technology being examined is not totally new to probation agencies. Drug testing of offenders has been a regular routine for a long while. However, the two drug testing techniques that are under examination in Florida are new to probation staff. These are sweat patch drug testing and visual identification and processing of eye responses (VIPER) (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

The sweat patch is a bandage that the offender wears from one to fourteen days. The patch consists of an outer layer, which allows water vapor, oxygen and carbon dioxide to permeate and an absorbent pad, which collects drugs that are discharged by sweat. The patch is numbered on the adhesive side of the patch to prevent replacement of the patch with another. The patch is then removed by probation staff for laboratory analysis (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

VIPER drug testing uses technology developed over the past twenty years. The person to be tested places their face up to a viewport attached to a computer. Two infrared cameras track the ocular response and the signals are sent to software on the computer (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

The data are stored on the offender's individual floppy disk, after a urine drug test is conducted for confirmation of the drug free person. This initial process establishes a baseline level to compare future testing of the case for drug usage (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

Both tests reduce the time officers spend with offenders in the conducting of urine drug tests. There is no waiting for the person, to be tested, to urinate and there is a decreased invasion of privacy. These tests can be conducted throughout all phases of triage management of cases.

The last technology to be discussed, in its generic methodology, is not fresh to probation agencies. What makes this pilot project, being tested in Florida, unique is the utilization of global positioning satellites for tracking. Electronic monitoring of offenders has been common in Florida for well over ten years (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

Global positioning satellites have been used in the military setting for quite a few years and in the determining of vehicle location for several years. The satellites are now being implemented in the tracking and location of offenders on supervision and victims. Offenders are equipped much as they are for regular electronic monitoring. They wear an anklet transmitter, as they did for regular electronic monitoring, but the electronic monitor piloted in Florida is tracked by satellite (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

Unlike regular electronic monitoring, satellite monitoring can pinpoint the exact location of the offender in the community within fifty feet. Not only does the probation officer know that the case may be out of place from the authorized location of the case- usually residence, employment site or treatment program- but exactly where to contact the offender to route the person back to the approved destination (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

There are two other aspects that are unique to this system. The offender can be paged or signaled to the transmitter by the probation officer with specific instructions. A second uniqueness of this system is that the victim can have a portable transmitter and paging devise to clip on(R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

This will aid the victim by giving the probation staff constant location of the victim and proximity of the offender, who originally victimized the victim. If the offender moves within a short distance of the victim, not only will the offender be charged with violation of their supervision, but the victim can be warned by a message being sent by the probation staff (R. Nimer, personal communication, 1996).

This satellite tracking system has been used by law enforcement in the tracking of automobiles, but it has other applications as well. An informant can be given the transmitting device to help officers pinpoint location of the person for both protection and tracking. Messages can be transmitted with instructions as needed. Offenders on supervision can be tracked by law enforcement, if law enforcement agencies are

equipped with the receiving computer. The offenders can be monitored for possible travel into high crime areas and other areas where groups of offenders congregate. There are unlimited possibilities for other criminal justice use, based on the imagination of persons in the law enforcement profession.

This system can be best utilized in caseload management, obviously with the high risk, intensive supervision aspect of triage supervision. It will greatly enhance the control capability of the officer and the accountability of the offender. Theoretically the supervision methodology and technological innovations seem to blend. There are empirical indications that the triage caseload management is efficient and effective, according to the Anoka County Community Corrections 1996 Comprehensive Plan (1995). As with many new types of methods and innovations, there are issues to be reviewed and resolved.

Issues

One of the major issues regarding implementation of new methods and obtaining the tools to carry out the tasks is money. Probation agencies, similar to other criminal justice agencies, are undergoing tight budget constraints. Agencies are mandated by legislature, the public and managers to downsize staff, consolidate services and resources, but at the same time carry out the mission, goals and objectives of the agency.

With the same mode of doing more with less permeating not only public agencies, but the private sector as well, there may be some remedy for those who need the latest technological tools. There is a surplus of equipment available since companies must cut back due to budgetary constraints. This equipment, some which are the tools needed by probation agencies, can be purchased at a reduced cost.

Another source of equipment is the military, due to the closing of military bases throughout the world. The technological tools, especially those outlined earlier are available for free by priority order given to federal agencies, state agencies, county agencies and municipal agencies.

Lastly, a resolution to the budgetary issue would be a consolidation of purchasing power by similar agencies needing similar technological tools and devices. Probation agencies can seek out other probation agencies, as well as other criminal justice agencies, and purchase the merchandise in bulk, thus reducing cost by this advantageous discount.

Another issue to tangle with is resistance to change by both administration and staff, who do not want to fluctuate from the status quo. Staff resistance to change can and must be addressed in order to successfully implement new methods of caseload management and new technology. Staff and administration alike need to share the difficulty of change and the ways to overcome them, as alluded to by Conner (1993).

An effective way to conquer resistance is to involve the potential resistors in the decision process from the beginning (Conner, 1993). The overall idea of triage supervision may be the wave of the future, but without the cooperation of staff it will fall to the wayside, as other techniques have. Involvement of all of them is the method to a smooth transition to triage supervision and the use of new technology.

Coupled with the involvement should be extensive, yet cost effective training. This can be accomplished in Florida through the use of the Distance Learning Network. With satellite link up locales throughout the state, a large number of staff can be trained at the same time and receive the same information. Further, this system allows for response by the recipients of the training, (L. Dumas personal communication, 1995). The resistance to the methods and technology can be alleviated from the onset of implementation.

A final issue to be resolved is the liability of new supervision methods and technology. Using new technology in delivering supervision services can place individuals and agencies in a position to face consequences for misuse of the tools and the methods. As the technological innovations are discovered and implemented, their use places the probation agency in a position of close scrutiny.

Decisions and interventions will be made based on data entry and the utilization of statistical outcomes regarding offenders on community supervision. If the data are not accurate or are entered into the database incorrectly, it will have impact on the offender, the public, legislature and the staff of the agency.

The offender may be erroneously diagnosed and placed in an inappropriate triage level of community supervision. The public may have a false feeling of security that there is the right level of control of the offender, when there might not be. The legislature may be making erroneous budgetary and policy decisions based on incorrect and inaccurate data. Staff of the probation agency suffer the consequences of the incorrect information and intervention through discipline, monetary suits and loss of their jobs due to their errors.

To resolve this issue, training from the beginning of the implementation process is most crucial. All staff and administrators need to be trained alike and extensively. Constant scrutiny, both internally and externally, of procedures and methodology is a must. Advisory boards with representatives from the public, the agency, other criminal justice agencies and the legislature would eliminate some of the liability possibilities. As with other issues and problems, taking a proactive approach relieves the probability of liability.

Conclusion

In June, 1995 the National Institute of Justice Corrections Technology Advisory Council met in Charleston, South Carolina and discussed technological needs of community corrections. Independently this research project was being conducted with the determination of an effective means of caseload management, integrated with innovative technology. The technological wish list of probation supervision practitioners, who met at the National Institute Conference, coincided with the research findings of this project. The subcommittee on community corrections members agreed that there was a need to expand technologies, that give probation officers more time to spend with offenders.

The piloted projects in Florida accomplish this need and achieve the obligation to be a suitable fit with the proposed utilization of triage management of community supervision cases. The technology on the cusp of the 21ST century, discovered during the research for this project, also corresponds with the conclusions of the subcommittee.

Chavaria (1994) advises that the main purpose of probation supervision is to shape or transform offender behavior through strategic intervention and it is inherent that practitioners develop a plan that includes being accountable for the potential risk of the offender to the community. It is therefore proposed that agencies review the use of triage supervision, making effective use of available technology in supervising and managing the overcrowded probation population in the communities throughout the nation. It is imperative as we approach the 21ST century.

John T. Rivers is a Correctional Probation Deputy Administrator with the Florida Department of Corrections, Community Corrections. He has had a varied career in the criminal justice field starting as a probation officer in 1970, working with a variety of offenders and conducting investigations to assist courts in sentencing. He has been an interstate compact specialist, assisting probation officers in transferring offenders from state to state. He has supervised officers and offices throughout Orange County. He now monitors the operation of 5 of the 12 probation offices in Orange and Osceola County. He is a graduate of the Florida State University with a Bachelors degree in Criminology and a Masters degree in Social Work. He is a past recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Council on Crime and Delinquency and a past member of the American Probation and Parole Association.

References

Anoka County Community Corrections (1995). Anoka County Community Corrections 1996 Comprehensive Plan. (Available from Anoka County Community Corrections, 325 E. Main St., Anoka, Minnesota 55303).

Boswell, G., Davies, M., & Wright, A. (1992).Contemporary probation practice. Aldershot: Avebury.

Burris, D. (1994). Technotrends. New York: Harper Business.

Chaveria, F. (1994). Building synergy in probation, Federal Probation, 58, 18-22.

Conner, D. (1993). Managing at the speed of change. New York: Villard Books.

Ellsworth, T. (1992). Contemporary community corrections. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, Inc.

Gendreau, P. Cullen, F., & Bonta, J. (1994). Intensive rehabilitation supervision: The next generation in community corrections?. Federal Probation, 58, 72-77.

Glaser, D. & Watts, R. (1992). Electronic monitoring of drug offenders on probation. Judicature, 76, 112-117.

Haavind, R. (1993). Can the U.S. cope with the techno-future?. USA Today, 121, 58-60.

Lilly, J., Ball, R., Curry G., & McMullen, J. (1993). Electronic monitoring of the drunk driver: A seven year study of the home confinement alternative. Crime and Delinquency, 39, 462-482.

Morgan, T. & Marrs, S. (1994). Washington's partnership between police and community corrections: A program worth emulating. American Probation and Parole Association Perspectives, 18, 28-30.

Mullaney, F. & Fulton, B.(1995). APPA's vision: Welcome to the land of OZ...Where dreams can come true. American Probation and Parole Association Perspectives, 19, 6-12.

Neel, S.(1995). Remote check-in systems keep tabs on probationers. Alternative to Intervention, 25, 23-26.

Quinn, J. & Hollman T. (1992). Electronic monitoring and family control in probation and parole. Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 17, 77-86.

Soma, J. (1994). Group reporting- A sensible way to manage high caseloads. Federal Probation, 58, 26-28.