

# **INNOVATIONS IN NEW YORK CITY PROBATION PRACTICES**

The innovations discussed in this report focus on the new emphasis being placed on enhanced community engagement and improved case management of probation clients. These innovations are a direct result of probation's overall Strategic Plan of 2010. The two vehicles for these objectives are the Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeON's) and the Individualized Achievement Plan (IAP) respectively. The overall aim and objective of the NeON's is to develop stronger community partnerships in impact communities, in an effort to improve access to services, resources and opportunities. Further, the overall goal of the IAP is to improve case management and supervision of clients by jointly tailoring case plans to fit their specific needs and interests.

To further bolster these initiatives, probation clients will have new access to a host of services, resources and opportunities via Mayor Bloomberg's recently launched Young Men's Initiative (YMI). This initiative targets challenged communities (inclusive of the NeON's) and has been designed to provide a range of options for young men of color – many of whom are on probation – including mentoring, educational services, career development supports and opportunities for enhanced civic engagement. Thus, these probation innovations are tied to, and in many respects, dependent upon many of the YMI programs being launched.

## **GOAL ONE: ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Neighborhood Opportunity Networks NeON's**

The Department of Probation (DOP) is launching Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeONs) in five New York City communities with high concentrations of residents on probation. With 27,000 people on probation city-wide, almost one-third of whom (approximately 9,000) are teens and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24, DOP is by far the City's largest alternative-to-incarceration. Of the young adult clients on probation, about 2,500 live in the five targeted NeON communities: Brownsville (275), Harlem (550), Jamaica (300), East New York (250) and the South Bronx (1,000). Eighty-four percent are men, 50 percent are Black and 30 percent are Latino.

The concept of the NeON's is a bold, data-driven undertaking grounded in sound theory and best practices, such as positive youth development.<sup>1</sup> It is also a justice reinvestment strategy that addresses crime and incarceration by implementing cost-effective policies and practices and putting resources in the communities most heavily involved with criminal justice systems. By 2012, DOP staff will co-locate with neighborhood-based organizations in each NeON community and join existing networks of employers, educators and service providers to expand and leverage opportunities for DOP clients. The overarching public safety goal is to help probation clients end any further involvement with the criminal justice system by strengthening their attachment to education, work and community. Below are key programs being offered in the NeON communities.

### **Supporting Growth and Development via Transformative Mentoring**

Key among the programs featured in the NeON's will be Transformative Mentoring. Transformative Mentoring features curriculum-based group mentoring intervention that helps justice-involved young adults transform the

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<sup>1</sup> Positive youth development is a comprehensive framework that emphasizes the importance of building on the positive attributes that young people have to promote their success.

attitudes and behaviors that have led to criminal activity. It serves young people whose needs go far beyond the traditional mentoring approach of companionship, confidence building and minor academic, social or career guidance.

The core components of the Arches transformative mentoring intervention include a group process where the group members become an important support system for each other; a curriculum based on cognitive behavioral principles delivered by culturally appropriate mentors; case management; 24/7 crisis intervention; and incorporation of positive youth development values, principles and practices. The focus is on the achievement of developmental outcomes—such as the ability to seek help in a crisis, get along with others, show up on time, and handle a job interview—that can prepare a person for education, employment and civic participation.

In each mentoring group mentors will deliver an interactive, dynamic curriculum to a group of young adults on a weekly basis. The curriculum is based on cognitive behavioral principles, with a focus on changing antisocial attitudes and feelings as well as skills training in self-control and self-management. The mentors serve as “credible messengers.” They will be culturally appropriate, responsive to the needs of individuals, and may have had personal experience with the justice system. In addition to facilitating the group sessions, mentors will be available 24/7 for crisis intervention.

In conjunction with the group mentoring sessions, participating young adults will meet regularly with their probation officers, who will be trained in the transformative mentoring approach and provide case management. Young adults, together with their probation officers, will develop Individual Achievement Plans<sup>2</sup> that address the developmental milestones that will prepare them to engage productively in education, work and civic life.

Research consistently finds that pro-criminal attitudes are a major predictor of future criminal behavior (Andrews, 1995).<sup>3</sup> The good news is that attitudes are productive targets for intervention, with changes in values and beliefs resulting in marked changes in behavior (Krosnick, 1988).<sup>4</sup> To date, the most promising interventions for justice-involved young adults involve the use of behavioral, cognitive, and social learning principles of interpersonal influence, skill enhancement, and cognitive change (Andrews et al., 1990; Andrews & Bonta, 1994).<sup>5</sup>

Specifically, approaches that focus on changing antisocial attitudes, feelings, and peer associations, promoting identification with anti-criminal role models, and skills training in self-control and self management have been helpful in reducing criminality.<sup>6</sup> Cognitive behavioral approaches are designed to help people become aware of and positively change those thought process that lead to maladaptive behaviors and interfere with successful attainment of personal goals (Meichenbaum, 1977).<sup>7</sup> Research finds that group cognitive-behavioral treatment approaches are effective at reducing future criminal behavior among young adult offenders.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> IAPs are individualized and transparent probation contracts with specific goals and conditions that match the interests, needs and challenges of each probation client.

<sup>3</sup> Golden, Lori, “Evaluation of the Efficacy of a Cognitive Behavioral Program for Offenders on Probation: *Thinking For A Change*,” University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, 2002. Pro-criminal attitudes and antisocial beliefs have been characterized by distrust of authority figures (e.g., police, judges), perceptions of the world as hostile and unsafe, endorsement of aggressive solutions, and identification with criminal peers.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> Id.

The overarching goal that DOP seeks to accomplish with the transformative mentoring intervention is to help young adults on probation end any further involvement with the criminal justice system. Particularly, DOP seeks to lower the rates of recidivism for young adults in the program by five to ten percent.<sup>9</sup> Many young adults on probation need a series of interventions in order to enable them to desist from criminal activity and strengthen their attachment to education, employment and community. The Transformative Mentoring program is designed to meet young people where they are in this process of pro-social engagement, focusing on changes in cognition and thinking that precede the ability to secure concrete attainments in education and employment.

Short-term outcomes from the transformative mentoring intervention include behavioral changes such as increased well-being, decreased substance abuse and violent behaviors, and decreased self-harm as well as attitudinal changes including better personal and family relationships, increased self-esteem, self-efficacy and social competence, and improved skills for avoiding risky behaviors and engaging in positive behaviors. Longer-term outcomes include advances in education, employment and self-sufficient living. Outcomes will be assessed through self-report measures, applied skills tests, and reports of mentors and probation staff. DOP will also track recidivism as measured by new arrests, arrests for felonies, arrests for violent felonies, criminal convictions and technical violations of probation.

### **Increasing Educational Achievement, Career Development and Civic Engagement: Young Adult Justice Programs (YAJP)**

The YAJP will feature two tracks, *Justice Scholars* and *Justice Community*. The goals of the Young Adult Justice Scholars program are to promote lifelong educational gains, support employment attainment and retention for court involved young adults, reduce crime and recidivism and help build stronger and safer communities in New York City. Young Adult Justice Scholars is an education-based program serving court involved young adults living in communities with a high level of need of services. The Justice Scholars program is designed to focus on educational gains, with multiple educational tracks for participants at various levels—including options for young adults in high school, working towards a GED, needing basic education classes or ready for a post-secondary track.

The program also uses tutoring services to supplement educational programming. All Justice Scholars participants will also engage in career exploration services that will introduce potential career fields and encourage participants to establish individual goals and plans. Justice Scholars is a minimum six month program with a minimum six month follow-up period. The program uses educational services, tutoring, career exploration, case management and peer support, financial incentives, placement and follow-up services to produce positive impact.

The goals of the Young Adult Justice Community program are to encourage court-involved young adult New Yorkers' successful attachment to education, work and community engagement; reduce crime and recidivism; and build stronger, safer, more empowered communities. Young Adult Justice Community is a community-based program serving court-involved young adults living in communities with high rates of poverty, incarceration, probation and parole. The program is designed to engage participants in subsidized community benefit projects, in one or more of the designated communities, that provide educational, work, team and civic engagement experiences, as well as youth leadership, peer mentorship, life skills and case management.

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<sup>9</sup> The best evidence-driven interventions rarely exceed ten percent reductions in recidivism when subjected to rigorous evaluation (Lipsey & Cullen 2007). Transformative Mentoring is based on the same principles as these successful programs; therefore DOP anticipates that Arches will produce outcomes that average those of similar programs.

All Justice Community participants should have a positive team experience working on community benefit projects toward a common goal, resulting in personal growth and an overall benefit for the community. Participants will be encouraged to maximize the length and intensity of their involvement with the program to advance their academic, occupational and community goals. However, to accommodate individual service needs, the program will maintain an open enrollment policy, making the terms and length of participation flexible enough to allow participants to enter, leave and/or return to the program as needed. This component of the program is goal-oriented, utilizes teamwork, introduces the participants to positive community role models, and promotes understanding of participants' legal rights as a means of reducing barriers to future gainful employment.

### **Literacy Support**

Two-thirds of the approximately 9,000 young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are on probation (about 6,000) do not have either a high school diploma or a GED. The reasons why these young adults do not complete high school are varied, but a significant percentage of them have difficulty with reading, writing and mathematics. Falling behind in credits and older than their peers, these young people leave school without a diploma and with limited prospects for the future. They are disproportionately Black and Latino. They are some of the most disconnected youth in New York City.

In recent years, new options have become available to support some young people who fail to complete high school. In 2005, the NYC Department of Education established the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation to help young people between the ages of 16 and 21. Transfer High Schools and part-time afternoon and evening programs (Young Adult Borough Centers) confer a high school diploma to those who complete the New York State graduation requirements of 44 credits and pass five regents exams. Part-time and full-time GED programs prepare students to take the exam for GED.

Some young people however, especially those involved in the criminal justice system, will not return to school. For those reading below an 8th grade level, appropriate educational services are scarce. The low skill level of these individuals makes it difficult for them to find and maintain employment and achieve economic security. Even if they seek employment, the best employment choices for them are often limited to low wage dead-end jobs. Funding from both federal and state workforce development programs stress GED and job-readiness which these young people do not possess. Adult literacy programs often have a culture and a structure geared towards a more mature student, while funding levels limit the resources available for counseling and other supports essential for a justice-involved young adult population.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, lack of educational attainment, lack of gainful employment and criminal behavior are inextricably linked. A 1995 meta-analysis showed that education is one of the most promising approaches to reduce reoffending.<sup>11</sup> Illiteracy and innumeracy have been linked with social marginalization which correlates with

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<sup>10</sup> Research demonstrates that literacy programs for young adults are most effective when they also help young people deal with crises and develop coping skills and resiliency related to social and emotional issues. Wrigley, H. and Powrie, J. (2006). *Now I Get It! Report on the National Youth Literacy Demonstration Project*. Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>11</sup> Lipsey, M. (1995). *What do we learn from 400 research studies on the effectiveness of treatments with juvenile delinquents*. In J. McGuire (ed.) *What works: Reducing re-offending – guidelines for research and practice*. London: John Wiley & Sons.

increased criminal activity later in life.<sup>12</sup> A longitudinal study of young people who had stopped offending found that young men who had skills that supported conventional involvement in school and other social systems were more likely to desist from crime.<sup>13</sup> In order to ensure that disconnected youth have the opportunity to access education, find employment, achieve economic security, and desist from crime, basic skills programs designed to assist young adults towards earning a GED are key.

To address this compelling issue, NYC Probation will be incorporating Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) into an array of services being offered. CEPS was created by the Youth Development Institute (YDI) in 2005 to reconnect at risk young people to learning and get them on the path to education and productive employment. It is one of the few programs in New York City that specifically address the literacy needs of young adults who read at the pre-GED level.

The goals of CEPS are twofold: to strengthen the capacity of community organizations to provide high quality and integrated youth development, support, and education services; and to enable youth to develop skills, attitudes, experiences, and credentials to achieve self-sufficiency and active involvement in the classroom and the community. Based upon current research and best practice, CEPS is a highly structured and integrated program that melds high quality instruction, personal support, and career development within a youth development framework. CEPS enables young adults to desist from crime and get on track to a GED, higher education and a career.

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<sup>12</sup> Stephenson, M. (2007). *Young People and Offending: Education, Youth Justice and Social Inclusion*. London: Willan Publishing.

<sup>13</sup> Ayers, C.D., Williams, J.H., Hawkins, J.D., Peterson, P.L., Catalano, R.F., and Abbott, R.D. (1999). Assessing correlates of onset, escalation, de-escalation and desistance of delinquent behavior. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15(3), 277-306.

## **GOAL TWO: IMPROVED CASE MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION OF CLIENTS**

### **Individual Achievement Plan**

The NYC Department of Probation (DOP) is revamping the way it supervises its clients. A Supervision and Case Management Protocols Committee was formed to restructure the way that clients and POs interact. This initiative examined the entire Probation process from Intake to Violations. Changes from this review have allowed the agency to achieve some of our strategic goals including safer Communities and increased Opportunities, Resources and Services to our clients. One significant area of change is the introduction of the Individual Achievement Plan (IAP). Clients meet with their Probation Officers and together select three areas of deficits from a domain of seven targeted areas. As the client completes the assigned areas, he/she with agreement from the PO, move on to other areas of need. A copy of the IAP is attached.

Clients are encouraged through incentives to get off probation early and live a productive and law abiding life. A Client Incentive Committee is currently developing an enhanced array of incentives to further motivate clients. As a result, Probation Officers have increased requests for Early Discharges to court for clients who fulfill their Conditions of Probation. POs will assist in this process by linking clients to an array of services including Transformative Mentoring, Job Placement and Educational Services.

The outline below highlights the process by which the IAP will serve as a tool to improve case management practices and client outcomes.

### **Individual Achievement Plan (IAP) Process**

- Within the first 45 days of being placed on probation, the PO and the probationer must develop the IAP.
- The PO and probationer will select together three of the following seven Domains of Development that will be the focus areas of improvement during the time the client will be on probation:
  - Education
  - Employment
  - Healthy relationship with a positive adult
  - Positive Peer Interaction / Pro-social thinking
  - Substance Abuse
  - Mental Health
  - Housing
- The fourth general area of focus for all probationers will be to “Remain Crime Free.”
- The PO and the probationer will complete the IAP. In the plan, they must:

- State the current assessment of the status of the probationer in each of the focus areas
  - Create goals for the probationer in these focus areas
  - Agree how the PO will help and support the probationer in achieving these goals
  - Agree how the probationer will participate in the selected services and supports to achieve these goals
  - All subsequent meetings between the PO and the probationer will focus primarily on discussing the progress, challenges, and needs of achieving the goals in the focus areas (Crime Free and the selected 3)
- The IAP must be updated and revised as needed—if a goal is achieved, if a new challenge arises, etc.

# Individual Achievement Plan

## Probation Officer/Client Contract

### Section I. Demographics (Please provide the most current demographics for Probationer)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Alt Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Probation Officer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Offense Information

Offense(s) for which placed on Probation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Probation Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Probation End Date (MED) \_\_\_\_\_

Risk Score/Level \_\_\_\_\_

**Section II. Contact Requirements**

Based on the Client/Probationer’s assessed risk level and Probation supervision program, the Probation Officer and Client/Probationer agree to the following face-to-face Monthly Contact requirements:

- Office visits by Client/Probationer to the PO’s office: \_\_\_\_\_
- Home visits by Probation Officer to the Client/Probationer’s residence: \_\_\_\_\_
- Collateral Visits by Probation Officer to the Client/Probationer’s program, school, etc: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section III. Service Plans**

Of the seven domains, the PO and Client select the three that will be the focus during the time of supervision, in addition to the fourth—staying crime free.

**Anti-Social Thinking/Criminal Thinking** (examples: Complete Thinking for a Change Group, attend Transformative Mentoring groups, etc)

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Services to Receive</b>	<b>Provider Contact Information</b>	<b>Length of Program (Start &amp; End Dates)</b>	<b>Attendance Days &amp; Times</b>

**Education** (example: Earn high school diploma, earn GED, enroll in college, attend literacy classes, attend GED classes, improve school attendance, etc)

Goals	Services to Receive	Provider Contact Information	Length of Program (Start & End Dates)	Attendance Days & Times

**Workforce Development Services** (examples: complete job training program, gain employment)

Goals	Services to Receive	Provider Contact Information	Length of Program (Start & End Dates)	Attendance Days & Times

**Healthy Relationship with a Positive Adult** (examples: Have a mentor, be on a sports team, )

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Services to Receive</b>	<b>Provider Contact Information</b>	<b>Length of Program (Start &amp; End Dates)</b>	<b>Attendance Days &amp; Times</b>

**Behavioral Health Services** (examples: individual counseling, mental health therapy, substance abuse treatment, sex offender services, etc.)

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Services to Receive</b>	<b>Provider Contact Information</b>	<b>Length of Program (Start &amp; End Dates)</b>	<b>Attendance Days &amp; Times</b>

**Housing** (examples: maintain stable housing, get an apartment, get Section VIII voucher, etc)

Goals	Services to Receive	Provider Contact Information

**Additional Services & Supports** (examples: child care, parenting classes, financial management, anger management, etc)

Goals	Services to Receive	Provider Contact Information	Length of Program (Start & End Dates)	Attendance Days & Times

**Section IV. Agreement**

**Contract Agreement:**

The undersigned hereby agree to abide by this contract. The Probation Officer (PO) and the Client/Probationer agree that the above three completed fields in addition to remaining crime free will be the area of focus throughout the supervision period.

The Client/Probationer agrees to enroll, engage, and comply with all services, programs, supports, and opportunities agreed upon in the three focus areas. The Client/Probationer further agrees to make all mandated contacts with the PO and keep the PO informed of any changes of address and progress or lack there off toward these goals. The Client/Probationer also agrees to abide by any and all additional conditions of probation ordered by the court and attached to this Individual Achievement Plan (IAP)/Contract.

The PO agrees to assist, support, and encourage the Client/Probationer to take full advantage of all services, programs, supports, and opportunities agreed upon in the three focus areas. The PO agrees to not only refer but to ensure the Client/Probationer is engaged in the appropriate supports and services.

The PO's supervisor agrees to assist and support the PO and the Client/Probationer in fulfilling this contract and to review the progress of this IAP/Contract at least every 90 days.

This IAP/Contract is to be updated and amended as necessary by all parties.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client/Probationer' Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Probation Officer's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Case Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
PO Supervisor's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date