



Client Satisfaction

Applying Outcomes Management to Client Services

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY, IL
DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION SERVICES
DIVISION OF JUVENILE PROBATION & DETENTION SERVICES
CLIENT SERVICES SURVEY

Mission Statement

The mission of the Circuit Court of Lake County is to serve the public. It accomplishes this mission by providing a fair and responsive system of justice, committed to excellence, and fostering public trust, understanding and confidence.

The Administrative Office of the Circuit Court supports the mission of the Court by providing programs and services that are accessible to Court users, are delivered fairly and expeditiously, and enhance the independence and accountability of the judicial system. Each of the six divisions of the Administrative Office include among their operational goals provisions for better serving the public; of these, several divisions provide regular supervision of and services to those members of the community charged with or convicted of a criminal offense: the Divisions of Adult Probation Services and Juvenile Probation & Detention Services.

Survey Purpose

Criminal defendants and sentenced offenders hold a unique role in the delivery of programs and services within the justice system. These persons are usually not considered *clients* or *customers* in the traditional sense because their entry into the court system is not purely voluntary, nor are the services provided to them initially perceived to be in their own self interests. Programs, services, and supervision provided to them are not anything sought, but rather conditions placed upon them by the Court. Despite this distinction, however, because organizational resources are expended on this group in an effort to achieve a particular outcome, they are considered to be Court clients in a broader sense and use of the term. The court takes appropriate responsibility to assure that these clients understand and are compliant with the conditions placed upon them; Court resources, in terms of staff time, effort, and interventions, are directed towards enforcing these conditions; and the anticipated outcomes associated with these services are that offenders follow the orders of the court and remain crime-free. These outcomes are directly related to increased community safety and, therefore, advance public trust and confidence in the judicial system.

In order to maximize the effective and efficient use of court resources, as a means towards increasing offender compliance with the conditions of supervision (both at the pre-trial and post-adjudication stages) and reducing recidivism, the Circuit has embraced evidence-based practices (EBP) as the basis for offender management. EBP is not a specific program or technique, but refers to those principles that have been proven to best reduce offender recidivism. Current research indicates that the most effective interventions with offenders share similar characteristics in terms of targeting offender risk, needs and responsibility. A number of research studies over the past two decades have demonstrated that matching higher-risk offenders with more intense services (e.g., risk principle) and specifically addressing dynamic criminogenic needs (e.g., needs principle) can significantly reduce recidivism.

Opportunities to address responsibility factors exist at each stage of offenders' experience with the justice system. Stakeholders and justice partners throughout this process, including judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys,

and other non-judicial staff, are strongly encouraged to respond appropriately and adequately to address an offender's individual issues. Probation officers, in particular, are identified as being uniquely situated within the criminal justice system to function as change agents in order to prepare offenders motivationally to comply with the conditions of probation, engagement with treatment providers and programming, and to invest in other positive life changes. Such actions closely adhere with the performance standards established for the Court (Circuit Court of Lake County, IL Strategic Plan, 2009):

- The Court shall give individual attention to cases, deciding them without undue disparity among like cases and upon legally relevant factors.
- Decisions of the court shall unambiguously address the issues presented to it and make clear how compliance can be achieved.
- The Court shall take appropriate responsibility for the enforcement of its orders.

Methodology

Effective private-sector administrators have long recognized the value of consumer feedback for improving practices and management decisions. Well-developed customer surveys can identify potential problem areas in service delivery, staff responsiveness, and the ability to address the needs of special populations. Feedback can also validate the effectiveness of existing business practices. Only recently have the correctional and justice communities begun to seriously consider probationers as clients and to solicit their feedback.

Client surveys in corrections typically examine only specific areas related to offenders' experience with treatment interventions (e.g., substance abuse treatment) or attitudes regarding the meaningfulness of their sentence compared to other offender groups (e.g., imprisoned offenders). Only a handful of published surveys have used correctional client feedback for performance management and improvement. The Walker County (Texas) Office of the Judicial District Community Supervision and Corrections Department, for example, developed a questionnaire to survey probationers about their perceptions of the department, its staff, and its services (Henningsen et al., 1996). The Nueces County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections Department employed an updated, much more comprehensive version of this survey (Rhoades and Venegas, 2006). This survey solicited probationers' opinions concerning secretarial assistance, availability of office hours, transportation, services (specifically, employment, GED training, and alcohol and drug counseling), and probation officers. Several survey questions demonstrated good discriminant validity and significant response variability and were strongly correlated with overall probationer satisfaction; for example,

- ❖ *When you were first put on probation, did the Probation Officer clearly explain the rules of probation to you?*
- ❖ *When you were first put on probation, did the Probation Officer clearly answer all of your questions?*
- ❖ *Do you think you have a good relationship with your Probation Officer?*
- ❖ *Do you think that your Probation Officer treats you fairly?*
- ❖ *Do you think your Probation Officer treats you with respect?*
- ❖ *Do you think your Probation Officer wants to help you with your problems?*
- ❖ *Do you think your Probation Officer has helped you to succeed on Probation?*
- ❖ *When you have a question, does your Probation Officer answer it clearly and honestly?*

Based on the findings of Rhoades and Venegas (2006), the Circuit Court of Lake County Senior Management Team developed ten questions about the quality of the relationship between supervised court clients and supervising staff members. After extensive pilot testing in 2009, results were released to court managers and stakeholders and to court staff and the general public on the court's website. Feedback resulted in a final set of ten general questions tailored to the specific populations served by the divisions. The Senior Management Team also called for an initial six-month survey cycle to track changes in court clients' perceptions and to evaluate the impact of court improvement initiatives. In 2010 the survey was administered to clients in Adult Probation Services and Juvenile Services. The initial survey cycles provided a baseline for future application of the survey, which occurred annually each May from 2011 to 2016

Findings

Extensive pilot testing of the instrument was conducted throughout the organization with slightly varying versions of the survey being applied during January and May/June 2009. The results of the latter pilot survey were released to Court managers and stakeholders in July 2009 and to court staff and the general public on the Court's website in September 2009. Feedback received throughout this process resulted in the development of several final version of the survey in January 2010: a set of 10 general questions tailored to the specific population served by the division. Questionnaires were written to accommodate both English- and Spanish-speaking clients in the divisions. In addition, an initial six-month survey cycle was decided upon by the Senior Management Team in order to track changes in the perceptions of court clients and to evaluate the impact of court improvement initiatives. In 2010, the survey was administered to clients in affected divisions for four weeks during February and one week during September. Due to scheduling of specific services during those months, surveys were distributed to Group Reporting participants from Adult Probation Services during April and October. The court divisions and units identified in the client survey include:

- **Adult Probation Services:** The Division of Adult Probation Services is responsible for investigating, interviewing and managing adult criminal defendants and sentenced offenders released to community supervision. Direct client services are facilitated, as directed by the Court, throughout the criminal justice process.
- **Juvenile Probation & Detention Services:** The Division of Juvenile Probation and Detention Services is comprised of four primary functional components and supporting units – Juvenile Intake, Secure Detention, Juvenile Probation and the FACE-IT Program. Collectively they represent a continuum of services from informal diversionary-level interventions, to structured supervision in the community, to residential care and intensive treatment.

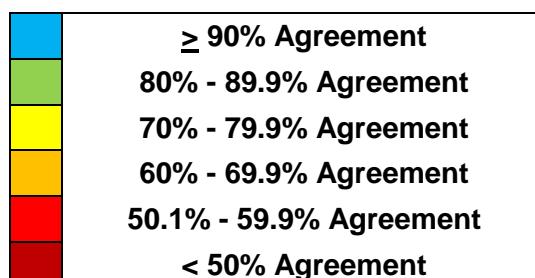
Questionnaires are distributed to all clients who meet with Court staff during the course of normal business. Assurances are made by staff that clients complete surveys only once during that time. In Adult Probation Services, surveys are distributed to clients when reporting to meet in the office with their assigned probation officer by front desk receptionists; pretrial services officers distribute the surveys to defendants at face-to-face meetings at the office or in the field; and surveys are distributed to group reporting offenders at the beginning of scheduled group meetings. In Juvenile Probation Services, surveys are distributed to juvenile probationers and their parent(s)/guardian(s) during scheduled office or home visits. In secure detention, juvenile offenders are given the

survey at the time of release; FACE-IT participants are given the survey on a single day; parent(s)/guardian(s) of detention and FACE-IT youth are distributed the survey during visitation periods.

The table below examines the response rates of all surveys completed within the organization and each of the divisions, as well as the unit-level break-downs for the Division of Adult Probation Services (General Probation, Group Reporting, Pretrial Services, and TIM Court) and the Division of Juvenile Probation & Detention Services (Juvenile Probation – Youth & Parents and Juvenile Detention & Residential Services – Youth & Parents), during the respective survey cycles.

CLIENT SURVEY – RESPONSE RATE ANALYSIS						
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
All Divisions	961	898	1084	1015	897	1026
Adult Probation Services	713	666	860	694	587	759
General Probation	282	179	466	240	259	516
Group Reporting	154	297	152	201	96	76
Pretrial Supervision	261	152	226	246	223	152
Therapeutic & Intensive Monitoring (TIM) Court	n/a	38	16	7	9	15
Juvenile Probation & Detention Services	248	232	224	321	310	267
Juvenile Probation	173	178	164	240	212	223
Juvenile Probation - Youth	75	80	80	132	114	118
Juvenile Probation - Parents	98	98	84	108	98	105
Juvenile Detention & Residential Services	75	54	60	81	64	44
Juvenile Detention & Residential Services - Youth	53	32	37	36	35	19
Juvenile Detention & Residential Services - Parents	22	22	23	45	29	25

The first chart below examines the response rates of all surveys completed within the court and each of the divisions, as well as the unit-level breakdowns for Adult Probation Services and Juvenile Probation and Detention Services. The remaining tables provide data for the *rate of agreement* to each of the ten items contained on the *client survey*. The circuit's Senior Management Team established a performance goal of *80 percent agreement* for each item, which has been recommended as an appropriate starting point for other performance measurement initiatives and successfully integrated with additional customer-improvement efforts throughout the circuit. Using this score as a standard allows for better comparisons among the various divisions and general observations about the results. The rate of agreement is determined by the percentage of valid responses to an item answered as either "Agree" (4) or "Strongly Agree" (5). Responses answered as "Don't Know" (N/A), or that were missing, were excluded from the analysis. A color-coding scheme allows division directors and unit managers to prioritize items that require corrective action.



CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY							
Item	Survey Year						Change
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
1. Overall, I was satisfied with the services I (<i>my child</i>) received as a client.	74.9%	75.8%	77.5%	81.9%	78.3%	81.3%	+3.0%
2. When I (<i>my child</i>) first reported, a staff person clearly explained the rules and what was expected of me.	83.9%	83.7%	87.4%	89.4%	86.3%	89.6%	+3.3%
3. When I (<i>my child</i>) first reported, a staff person clearly answered all of my questions.	84.4%	83.3%	86.0%	89.5%	86.0%	88.5%	+2.5%
4. I believe that I have a good relationship with this staff person.	77.5%	78.9%	81.5%	84.0%	81.2%	83.8%	+2.6%
5. I believe that this staff person treats me fairly.	83.0%	84.5%	85.5%	89.9%	86.1%	87.8%	+1.7%
6. I believe that this staff person treats me with respect.	84.6%	85.2%	87.8%	91.6%	88.0%	88.9%	+0.9%
7. I believe that this staff person wants to help me (<i>my child</i>) with my (<i>his/her</i>) problems.	77.6%	80.6%	81.5%	84.3%	80.9%	85.4%	+4.5%
8. I believe that this staff person wants to help me (<i>my child</i>) to succeed on supervision?	81.9%	84.3%	85.4%	88.4%	84.4%	87.5%	+3.1%
9. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it clearly.	84.4%	84.0%	87.3%	90.3%	87.3%	89.0%	+1.7%
10. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it honestly.	84.4%	84.6%	86.8%	90.8%	88.0%	89.2%	+1.2%

DIVISION OF ADULT PROBATION SERVICES							
Item	Survey Year						Change
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
1. Overall, I was satisfied with the services I received as a client.	78.7%	80.7%	78.0%	80.3%	75.5%	77.2%	+1.7%
2. When I first reported, a staff person clearly explained the rules and what was expected of me.	85.3%	86.7%	88.3%	88.7%	84.6%	87.3%	+2.7%
3. When I first reported, a staff person clearly answered all of my questions.	86.0%	86.5%	87.1%	88.4%	85.7%	86.6%	+0.9%
4. I believe that I have a good relationship with this staff person.	80.8%	83.2%	82.5%	81.8%	79.9%	80.9%	+1.0%
5. I believe that this staff person treats me fairly.	86.5%	87.1%	86.6%	89.3%	84.7%	85.3%	+0.6%
6. I believe that this staff person treats me with respect.	87.9%	87.9%	88.2%	90.1%	86.2%	87.0%	+0.8%
7. I believe that this staff person wants to help me with my problems.	80.3%	83.3%	82.2%	81.6%	77.2%	81.9%	+4.7%
8. I believe that this staff person wants to help me to succeed on supervision?	84.5%	86.2%	86.3%	86.1%	81.6%	84.4%	+2.8%
9. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it clearly.	86.9%	87.1%	88.2%	89.6%	85.4%	87.2%	+1.8%
10. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it honestly.	87.1%	87.6%	87.8%	89.5%	86.1%	87.6%	+1.5%

Division of Juvenile Probation & Detention Services							
Item	Survey Year						Change
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
1. Overall, I was satisfied with the services I (<i>my child</i>) received as a client.	62.7%	60.9%	75.9%	85.4%	84.4%	92.5%	+6.1%
2. When I (<i>my child</i>) first reported, a staff person clearly explained the rules and what was expected of me.	79.4%	74.8%	83.7%	90.9%	89.7%	95.9%	+6.2%
3. When I (<i>my child</i>) first reported, a staff person clearly answered all of my questions.	79.2%	73.6%	81.4%	91.7%	86.6%	93.7%	+7.1%
4. I believe that I have a good relationship with this staff person.	66.7%	65.6%	77.8%	88.6%	84.3%	91.8%	+7.5%
5. I believe that this staff person treats me fairly.	71.5%	76.4%	81.3%	91.1%	89.1%	94.8%	+5.7%
6. I believe that this staff person treats me with respect.	73.9%	77.0%	86.4%	94.9%	92.1%	94.4%	+2.3%
7. I believe that this staff person wants to help me (<i>my child</i>) with my (<i>his/her</i>) problems.	68.7%	72.2%	79.0%	90.2%	89.1%	95.1%	+6.0%
8. I believe that this staff person wants to help me (<i>my child</i>) to succeed on supervision?	73.1%	78.4%	81.6%	93.3%	90.6%	96.3%	+5.7%
9. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it clearly.	75.7%	74.2%	83.5%	91.8%	90.9%	94.0%	+3.1%
10. When I have a question, I believe that this staff person will answer it honestly.	75.1%	75.2%	82.6%	93.7%	92.1%	93.7%	+1.6%

Conclusions

Overall, the survey results are impressive and very positive. Comparative benchmarking in offender-client satisfaction is limited at this time due to the sparse and idiosyncratic use of client surveys within the larger correctional community. Despite this lack of standardization, some general conclusions can be drawn and internal efforts for improvement can be made.

Macro-level measures reflect either the whole system or major-system-unit performance (e.g., functional units of the court organization or divisions of the organization) and serve somewhat different purposes than "micro-level" measures. (e.g., individual staff member or small group). They are typically used by unit managers, assistant directors, directors, or court leadership or external consumers for:

- assessing organizational performance against key strategic objectives
- determining incentive compensation (annual reviews and setting next year's individual performance targets)
- making decisions about capital allocation
- setting strategic planning goals and direction
- interacting with funding authorities or state-level leadership

The Senior Management Team reviewed the current survey's results. The directors then shared the results with their management teams and employees; the results can be drilled down to individual employees to address problems as necessary. The staff have been proactively addressing the initial shortcomings that characterized

earlier cycles of the survey, such as addressing expectations, rules, and questions early in the process rather than reacting to problems later, and integrating motivational interviewing and solution-focused therapy techniques to reduce client resistance, reluctance, reactance, and ambivalence. The managers and staff have further offered several suggestions to improve the existing perceptions of the client-staff relationship within divisions and throughout the organization. For example:

- provide assistance and support to staff in their efforts to be more personable with correctional clients—especially more difficult clients
- provide opportunities for staff to spend more quality time with clients
- facilitate regular, on-site motivational-interviewing refresher trainings—currently, there are several motivational-interviewing expert facilitators available to assist staff and provide training at both juvenile and adult facilities
- coordinate to provide in-service trainings in cognitive-change and cognitive-restructuring strategies, in addition to cognitive-outreach-group (COG) facilitators and staff from psychological services to assist juvenile and adult probation staff with training and to offer suggestions to deal with difficult clients

The current survey offers only an indicator of the complex probation officer-correctional client relationship. Although some of the principles are considered basic, it takes a great deal of effort to turn around long-standing attitudes and behaviors regarding work with probationers. Staff must learn to accept their role as change agents for this to be successful. Through continuing to monitor staff behaviors in this area, we can ensure that the court organization is trying to provide the highest-quality services and continuous organizational improvement.