

JUDGES' UPDATE

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Information for the Judiciary



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YOUR INPUT

Welcome to the February issue of *Judges' Update* for 2001. If you have any comments or suggestions for this publication, please contact the General Manager Community Probation Service.

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New reports coming soon

Implementation of the Assessment component of Integrated Offender Management begins this month in several areas around the country.

Probation Officers in Hamilton, Rotorua, Bay of Plenty, Canterbury and Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast will be trained in Assessment over the next six months and the new reports will begin to be produced in Hamilton in early March.

These reports have been piloted in the Wellington Area and local judges provided feedback on the style and content.

Hamilton Area Manager Heather Mackie, who until recently was seconded to Head Office for the Integrated Offender Management project, says staff from Community Probation Service, Public Prisons Service and Psychological Service will give a 90-minute joint presentation to local Judges about the changes that the new system will bring.

"I think that Judges will notice a more consistent product from Probation Officers, with more information that is useful for them in sentencing. We will be better identifying what influences a person's offending and whether they are motivated to do something about it. Integrated Offender Management won't change the basic service we provide to the Courts, but it does give us better tools to do our job."

Hamilton has taken on extra staff who form a team that fills in anywhere needed, to support staff who are on training.

Heather says she is looking forward to implementing the new system. "I am not underestimating how challenging it will be, because this is one of the biggest things we have ever done. I predict it will take up to 18 months for us to reach the point where working within the Integrated Offender Management framework feels completely natural."

One of the new assessment tools, the Criminogenic Needs Inventory (CNI), aims to provide a more objective, accurate and reliable assessment of the offender and provide a better synopsis in reports of the factors that led to offending and the person's attitude and projected response to interventions. Integrated Offender Management emphasises consistency and all the Assessment tools will be used uniformly nationwide.

The new reports will also incorporate the new risk-prediction calculator, the ROC/ROI (Risk of Conviction/Risk of Imprisonment), which is a New Zealand-normed statistical tool that provides a probability of the offender's risk of re-offending. This tool has been tested for its accuracy and has been found to have success in predicting recidivism.

Integrated Offender Management is expected to be fully implemented at all Corrections sites by June 2002.

From the General Manager

Welcome to the first issue of Judges' Update for 2001.

I am acting for Ann Clark until she returns to Community Probation Service in late April. My substantive position with the Department of Corrections is General Manager of the Strategic Development Group.

As you are probably aware, our biggest priority at the moment is implementing Integrated Offender Management.

Integrated Offender Management will see a revolutionary change to the way Probation Officers and other Community Probation Service staff approach their work. It is based on very robust research from both New Zealand and overseas.

This is the biggest change Community Probation Service has ever undergone. Integrated Offender Management will enable us to better manage offenders and achieve our goal to reduce re-offending. We will have better tools than in the past and we will have much better integration of all the Services across the Department.

There are four key components to Integrated Offender Management, which, briefly, are:

- Induction – offenders are informed of what will happen to them throughout the course of their sentence.

- Assessment – uses new tools to assess offenders' risk of re-offending and risk of re-imprisonment, as well as better identify their criminogenic needs.
- Sentence Planning/Sentence Management – individual sentence plans will be developed for offenders, which could include programmes or other interventions, targeted at criminogenic needs and at high risk offenders.
- Reintegration – gives offenders skills and knowledge to live in the community and maintain the changes they have made during their sentence.

The article on the front page details the current implementation of the Assessment part of Integrated Offender Management.

Please contact your local Area Manager if you have any questions about Integrated Offender Management. Most Areas will be holding presentations for the judiciary as the various phases are rolled out around the country.

In this issue of Judges' Update we also look at the new court in Manukau and hear from a Probation Officer who shares a success story from his time as a Straight Thinking facilitator.

Katrina Casey
Acting General Manager

Judges pleased with new Manukau court team

The team of Probation Officers set up to service the new Manukau District Court has made a positive impression with local Judges in the first few months of operation.

Service Manager Suilaan Quedley, who manages the team, says she wanted to make a culture change after the staff left the now-defunct Otahuhu Court.

Feedback from Judges indicated they were frustrated at some aspects of the team's ability to service the court.

"We had some negative feedback, because we were stretched in terms of staff numbers - we only had three Probation Officers to service that court.

"We now have six Probation Officers and two administration staff and even though our workload has increased due to the redrawing of boundaries to include Manurewa, the latest feedback from Judges is that they are very impressed with our new level of service."

Suilaan says Court staff have also commented on how responsive the service has become.

"We are meeting our Service Level Agreement (SLA) in

completing non-custodial reports within two weeks and sometimes in less time. In exceptional circumstances we can do them very quickly, in less than a week."

There were some teething problems associated with the move from the Otahuhu District Court, which closed last November after 30 years in service.

Delays in getting premises close to the new court for the Community Probation Service team necessitated accommodation in less-than-ideal conditions in the court. "We were actually voted team of the month by Area staff last year for performing well while working in adverse conditions."

The team moved into its permanent base, located five minutes' walk away from the court, in late January this year.

There are now three teams preparing Provision of Information requests in Manukau: the Manukau District Court servicing team, Papakura/Franklin Court servicing team and the Manukau team.

Comprehensive research underpins IOM

The Department of Corrections' Psychological Service holds the Champion role for Integrated Offender Management. Special Projects Manager David Wales' role is to help increase people's understanding of Integrated Offender Management and to maintain the integrity of the system.

The key goal of Integrated Offender Management (IOM) is to reduce re-offending.

There is now a comprehensive body of local and international research which supports the concepts of Integrated Offender Management.

Three principles have also emerged from this research, which will help Probation Officers and Corrections Officers more effectively target resources to offenders.

Risk

The risk principle helps us target who should have access to interventions. It reflects research showing that interventions are more likely to be effective with offenders who have a high risk of re-offending. Targeting higher risk offenders also makes the best possible use of our resources. There is little point in spending money on offenders who are unlikely to re-offend.

Needs

The needs principle helps us target what areas we should address, in relation to individual offenders, to lower their risk of re-offending.

All offenders have a range of needs. Some of these needs are linked to their offending while some are not. Those linked to offending are called criminogenic (literally crime-causing) needs. Substantial research tells us which needs are more closely linked to offending. For instance, alcohol and drug abuse, having criminal associates, and having violent tendencies, fall into this category.

Criminogenic needs identified by research have been built into the Criminogenic Needs Inventory (CNI), the tool developed by the Department to assess and measure criminogenic needs.

This tool is currently being rolled-out to several Areas around the country, including Hamilton, Rotorua, Bay of Plenty, Christchurch, Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast and Wellington.

Responsivity

The responsivity principle uses research to inform us how to intervene with offenders. This research shows that interventions in which there is a good fit between the offender and the programme are most effective.

Applying this principle ensures:

- offenders are motivated to change (the CNI assesses how responsive an offender is likely to be in addressing each of their criminogenic needs)
- the intervention is best designed to meet the needs of the offender, which in practice generally means that the programmes developed by the Department allow for a range of learning styles.

Briefly

Service Centre's award-winning architecture

Community Probation Service's Hastings Service Centre won an architectural award late last year. The co-located building at 101 Lyndon Road won the New Zealand Institute of Architects/Resene Local Award for Architecture in the Hawkes Bay-Gisborne area.

Staff had input into the final design, which included a larger office area and a much-improved Periodic Detention area. The building is centrally located and near the District Court and the police station. It was built by Mackersey Construction Ltd and staff moved there in June.

Judicial support for Maori programme

Palmerston North staff are pleased at the support shown by Judge Ross to the Community Probation Service's flagship Tikanga Maori programme for offenders, Te Wairua O Nga Tangata Maori. Service Manager Ie Nua and Probation Officer Richard Paama briefed Judge Ross on the programme, seeking his support for making participation in the programme a condition of an offender's sentence, where appropriate. Judge Ross expressed a strong interest in being kept up-to-date with the programme and was looking forward to an invitation to the inaugural graduation.

Judges' Update under review

Community Probation Service's communications staff are planning to review this newsletter later this year, to ensure it is meeting your needs. We want to check that Judges' Update is providing timely, relevant information in a format you find useful. If you wish to provide us with feedback for this survey, please contact Kathy Bethell, Publications Editor, Community Probation Service: via email kathy.bethell@corrections.govt.nz or phone on 04 460-3152.

A Straight Thinking success story

Manukau Probation Officer and Straight Thinking facilitator Tony Iwikau recently bumped into a former client who attended the very first Straight Thinking programme run in Manurewa, two years ago.

He has remained offence-free since graduating from the programme.

"He had a history of continuous offending in the area of drink driving and driving while disqualified and he had also been imprisoned for a range of other offences," Tony says.

The offender had previously attended drug and alcohol education programmes, counselling and various other interventions while on Supervision and Parole. He also had a range of relationship issues and was unemployed and finding it very difficult to find work.

After beginning the Straight Thinking programme in

February 1998, the man began a new journey towards making better choices for his future and learned that there were more strategies and options available to him than he may have realised, Tony says.

"When I met him again, he told me that if he hadn't completed the programme he would be stuck in the same cycle of offending."

The man now has a full-time job, which he obtained just a week after graduating. He has been reunited with his whanau and has also been able to purchase a home.

"I have spoken to his partner and she believes that none of this would have happened if he had not done Straight Thinking. This story reinforces for me the fact that Probation Officers really are able to make a difference in the lives of offenders," Tony says.

Establishing Periodic Detention in rural areas

Wanganui-Taranaki Area Manager Myles Stilwell takes a look at the issues around establishing Periodic Detention in small rural areas. His Area management team is working on sentence availability in the Ohakune and Taihape areas.

"The lack of access to Periodic Detention gets a lot of coverage in newspaper court reports here. The issue is often raised in court by defence counsel or Judges. Their complaint is that it restricts sentencing options, which can result in offenders receiving inappropriately light sentences such as Community Service, or prematurely receiving a term of imprisonment.

The larger a town or city, the more likely it is to have a wide range of agency services available to offenders. The opposite is also true.

Sentence availability and access is often an issue for small rural centres serving widespread populations. I had the same experience while I was the District Manager of Alexandra, where Periodic Detention was not available anywhere in Central Otago.

Judges and members of the public felt that the community was missing out because offenders could not be sentenced to Periodic Detention. Some people even suggested that this fact actually attracted offenders to live in the area.

My opinion is that the opposite is the case. Many offenders find that the self-management required to fulfil a sentence of Community Service on an individual basis is a greater burden than the requirement to turn up weekly on a particular day to work in a group situation on Periodic Detention.

Here are some of the issues from my perspective, of whether we should provide Periodic Detention in the smaller rural parts of our Area:

- Access issues – how does an offender travel to Periodic Detention in the absence of public transport, particularly if they do not have a driver's licence?
- Practical issues of where to site the Periodic Detention centre - Taihape and Ohakune are 40 minutes' drive apart, with neither site generating sufficient numbers to warrant a van and staff member for each centre.
- Safety and security issues – caseload numbers make it difficult to justify more than one Probation Officer in each area.

- Resourcing issues – additional staffing could be difficult to justify in terms of accountability for spending public funds.

It is possible that more imaginative use of available sentencing may provide a solution. There appears no legislative reason why groups of offenders sentenced to Community Service cannot undertake larger projects as a group in a similar manner to Periodic Detention if a suitable sponsor is found. This would have clear cost advantages as well as being more responsive to fluctuating offender numbers.

Our management team intends to canvass local opinion over the next few months on these issues."



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