



# Parole Violations Revisited

*A Handbook on Strengthening Parole  
Practices for Public Safety and  
Successful Transition to the Community*

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## Foreword

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Probation and parole systems have two sets of goals that may appear to be in conflict but are in fact complementary: enabling offenders who have left jail or prison to successfully reintegrate themselves into the community and protecting the community from the risk of further crimes committed by these offenders. How agencies respond to parole and probation violations is a critical factor in achieving these goals. Jurisdictions across the nation are seeking to reduce the proportion of offenders who return to prison as a result of technical parole violations while identifying and revoking high-risk offenders more quickly.

In 2001, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) published *Responding to Probation and Parole Violations: A Handbook To Guide Local Policy Development*. That handbook used lessons learned from NIC technical assistance projects in 29 jurisdictions to provide guidelines to agency policy teams in other jurisdictions and to lead them through a series of activities designed to help them develop and refine their own violation policies.

This handbook builds on the suggestions and guidelines set forth in the earlier publication by incorporating the insights gained through the NIC technical assistance project, “Policy-Driven Responses

to Technical Parole Violations.” This project helped the four participating states—Georgia, Kansas, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—define their desired outcomes in responding to parole violations more clearly, examine their parole violation and revocation policies and practices more closely, articulate and implement those policies and practices more clearly and consistently, and measure their success in achieving their desired outcomes more systematically. Based on their experiences, this handbook sets forth a series of steps that jurisdictions can take to assess their current policy and practice, identify targets of change, and mobilize for change; and it provides tools to guide policymakers through this process.

Each jurisdiction must develop its own strategies for strengthening its response to parole violations based on its own values, statutes, offender populations, and resources. By adapting the materials in this handbook to their own circumstances, it is hoped that probation and parole agencies will be able to help meet their common goal—no new crimes, no new victims.

Morris L. Thigpen  
*Director*  
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## *Preface and Acknowledgments*

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In the course of providing technical assistance for parole violations policy and practice to interdisciplinary teams in the states of Georgia, Kansas, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) project generated key insights and lessons that are set forth in this handbook. These lessons are the direct result of the hard work and tenacity of the individuals and agencies involved in the project—they should be recognized for their contributions to their colleagues.

Major thanks are due to James Bralley and John Prevost in Georgia; to Marilyn Scafe, Robert Sanders, and Margie Phelps in Kansas; to Mario Paparozzi and Kevin McHugh in New Jersey; and to A.T. Wall, Lisa Holley, and Sisan Smallman in Rhode Island. Their able leadership and energy were essential to the effort. Although these individuals are mentioned by name, it should also be acknowledged that the tasks accomplished in each state depended on the willingness of a number of other individuals—too numerous to name—from different agencies and from different levels to do the hard work of gathering information, analyzing

practice, participating in strategic planning sessions, identifying targets for change, and implementing improvements in policy and practice. They formed the policy teams and the staff working teams who served as the genuine engines for change in each jurisdiction.

I would like to thank Cranston Mitchell and Kermit Humphries for providing leadership and support from NIC during this effort.

I would also like to thank the members of the technical assistance team—my colleagues at the Center for Effective Public Policy—Paul Herman, Peggy McGarry, Becki Ney, and Richard Stroker—for their insight and hard work on this project. Thanks are due, also, to Laura Winterfield of the Urban Institute who provided valuable advice to participating states on how to make their information systems more helpful in managing violations and revocation practices.

Finally, special thanks are extended to Brian Higgins of Aspen Systems Corporation for his perseverance in meeting our deadlines (and ensuring that we did too) and his untiring attention to detail in editing this document.

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## *Executive Summary*

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A sea change is taking place in the world of criminal justice and corrections. A veritable flood of offenders is returning from prison to the community—some 600,000 in 2002. Significant numbers of these offenders are cycling back into prison as a result of technical violations of parole. States are staggering under budget shortfalls of historic proportions. The correctional policies of the past two decades—increasingly committed to lengthy, mandatory incarceration—are being reassessed. Interest in ideas that have long been out of favor in correctional circles seems to be reemerging—sentencing discretion, discretionary parole release, and rehabilitation.

What some may see as a crisis may prove to be an opportunity to forge new and more effective correctional policy. Promising practices to ease the transition of offenders from prison to the community are based on accumulating research on effective interventions, the increasing availability of sound and empirically based risk-assessment tools, a growing appreciation of the need for collaboration across agency boundaries, and an increased willingness to involve community networks.

As the National Institute of Corrections undertook its most recent technical assistance initiative designed to assist

states in developing more policy-driven and effective responses to technical parole violations, it encountered jurisdictions caught in the sea change described above. The lesson emerging from the effort, however, is that through careful cross-system collaboration and the integration of evidence-based practice, states can respond to and weather the significant changes surrounding them. The four participating states have been able to reduce admissions to prison resulting from technical parole violations, use research-based risk assessment to target their resources, strengthen their approach to supervision and case management, and forge new partnerships with fellow criminal justice agencies and community resources.

This handbook highlights the lessons from this latest NIC technical assistance effort and identifies promising targets of change pursued by the four states. It also offers the user a step-by-step guide to assist in—

- Critically exploring current policy and practice with respect to parole violations and revocations, and
- Developing change strategies to strengthen parole practices in users' own jurisdictions.

*Section I*  
*Context*

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# Introduction: Myths and Facts About Parole

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## A New Focus

This handbook grows out of experiences from the most recent in a series of national technical assistance projects sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). This most recent project—the culmination of a series of such efforts over almost 15 years—was conceived as a way to assist paroling authorities and parole supervision agencies in their efforts to develop clearer and more effective responses to technical violations of parole, which are a growing source of admissions to state prisons.

Interdisciplinary teams representing four states—Georgia, Kansas, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—were chosen to participate from among the 20 states that applied. The project supported and guided these state teams through a collaborative process that involved forming policy and work teams to examine the issues, documenting current policy and practice, revisiting the definition of successful outcomes, assessing gaps between current and desired practice, identifying targets of change, and planning and implementing change strategies to achieve

**Myth:** *Each agency must simply work harder and smarter to deal more effectively with the challenge of parolees who violate.*

**Fact:** *Collaboration among agencies enables the entire system to work smarter and harder to respond effectively to violations.*

the desired outcomes. Each team identified the collaborative nature of the approach as the single most important ingredient in its ability to bring about change.

The participating teams' focus on parole violations and revocations quickly broadened to include an interest in the entire process of offender transition and reintegration to the community and the degree to which parole release and supervision practices can contribute to successful completion of this process. Parole success became an important theme of the work—one that implies and enhances community safety. Successful completion of parole carries with it no new crimes and no new victims.

The four states participating in the NIC project represented a wide variation in the number of individuals in prison and on parole, incarceration rates, size of parole staff, crime rates, and even the degree of urbanization and geographic size. Although empirical analysis in each of the four


**Myth:** *Parole policy must make a choice between the interests of the parolee and the interests of the community.*

**Fact:** *Policy supporting successful completion of parole serves public safety.*

**Myth:** *Parole violations are driving admissions to prison in many states.*

**Fact:** *Parole policies are driving admissions to prison in many states.*

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states revealed a similar percentage of those on parole involved in technical violations—75 to 80 percent—the way in which the different states responded to those violations varied dramatically. Admissions to prison as a result of parole violations ranged from 3 percent to 45 percent, depending on the degree to which violations were handled in the community through formal or informal means.

## Highlights

Highlights of this document include the following:

- The *lessons* emerging from experiences in these four states are explored.
- *Targets of change* that the four states have identified and implemented are described.

- A *practical six-step guide* for other states to follow in assessing and strengthening their parole practices is presented. Implementation of this guide will help states support the transition of offenders to the community and will help prevent future victimization.

At least one prominent scholar is now calling for the reinstatement of discretionary parole release and the strengthening of supervision practices as tools in ensuring successful reintegration of offenders returning from prison to the community.<sup>1</sup> The experience of this project represents an example of how discretionary parole can support successful offender reintegration. It confirms effective parole release and supervision practices as key tools in addressing some of the most pressing criminal justice challenges facing the United States today.

# *NIC's Technical Assistance Project on Parole Violations and Revocations: Background and Application*

## **Need for the Project**

One of NIC's core missions is to provide assistance to state and local correctional agencies. This NIC technical assistance project, begun in the summer of 2001, was directed at "Policy-Driven Responses to Parole Violations." The core concept was that responding to violations is a critical aspect of a parole supervision agency's work and that such response should be guided by clear policy to achieve the agency's vision, mission, and goals. Because the number of offenders on parole has been growing substantially (from 200,000 in 1980 to more than 650,000 in 2000),<sup>2</sup> even a stable rate of revocation translates to substantially greater numbers. The project was partly a response to concerns expressed by corrections professionals nationwide about the growing volume of parole revocations resulting from technical parole violations. Their areas of concern included the following:

- The most pressing concern was the impact of parole revocations on rates of admission to prison. The number of parole violators admitted to prison increased sevenfold between 1980 and 2000—from 27,000 to 203,000.<sup>3</sup> This was creating a significant drain on prison bed space and exacerbating prison crowding. Parole violators held in local jails awaiting disposition of their revocation petitions were similarly straining local jail capacity in some jurisdictions.
- Some parole officials were concerned that the rates of revocation varied greatly among districts or offices in a given state without apparent explanation. In some instances, revocation rates were extremely high; in others, they were extremely low. Was the variation a result of radically different parole populations? If not, did the variation simply result from differing philosophies of line officers or their supervisors? Were parole staff receiving insufficient guidance with regard to when a violation warranted revocation?
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that 68 percent of discharges of state parolees occurred as a result of either admission to prison or absconding in 1999. Such a high rate of revocations raised questions about the effectiveness of parole supervision. Some argued that parole agencies were being diligent in identifying violations and acting quickly to remove high-risk parolees from the community. Others argued that supervision should be more effective in contributing to good performance on parole and that such high revocation rates were an indictment of parole release and supervision practices.



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## Application and Selection

The project was administered for NIC by the Center for Effective Public Policy, which assembled a team composed of its own staff, independent consultants, and a research and data analysis expert from the Urban Institute. With the involvement of NIC project managers, this team was charged with providing assistance to the states that would participate. States were invited to submit applications for the assistance and were required to identify a “policy team” including membership from the state’s paroling authority and the head of the agency responsible for parole supervision. Other officials were to be included on the policy team to provide a key set of policymakers with the authority and commitment to bring about genuine system improvement toward “policy-driven responses to parole violations.” In the summer of 2001, 20 states applied, a testimony to the urgency with which this topic was viewed by a range of states nationwide.

Resources permitted the participation of four states. Those selected were Georgia, Kansas, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. The selection process placed heavy weight on the commitment of key policymakers to be actively involved, evidence of previous ability to bring about system changes, and a willingness to approach the work from a collaborative perspective. Each state also was required to commit significant staff time to supporting the work of the policy team.

Once selected, each state participated in a policy team retreat designed to develop a common focus for the effort and to develop a work plan for activities to be supported by the technical assistance project. This handbook will describe the details of some of the key activities and, in later chapters, the lessons emerging from the project. Key themes from early work during the policy team retreats and the teams’ examination of their current practices include the following:

- Although the project had begun with a focus on parole violations and revocations—what one might consider to be failure while on parole—all of the teams quickly articulated the idea that *their real focus as systems and agencies should be on how to best marshal their resources to assist parolees in making a successful transition and reintegration to the community*. Regardless of varying philosophies of sentencing and corrections, once an offender has served his or her term of incarceration, the interests of the offender, the victim, the community at large, and the criminal justice system converge. *Successful completion of parole means no new victims, a more stable community, and no return to prison*. This became a central theme of the work in all four states.
- The violation process—and the degree to which it was a help or a hindrance to successful transition and reintegration—was poorly documented and poorly understood in most of the jurisdictions. This was a result of limitations in management information systems in at least three of the states and, in the past, a lack of interest in and focus on the process. Little written policy existed in some of the jurisdictions, and there were varying interpretations of the policy that did exist. Therefore, a major part of the assistance was to guide the states through a careful review of policies, procedures, and practices.
- Even preliminary quantitative analysis across the four states suggested that practices differed widely. In two of the states, admissions to prison as a result of parole revocations appeared quite high. At least one state was handling a large percentage of violations through informal or intermediate methods rather than by returning parolees to prison. The variations seemed to be the result of differing

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supervision and decision practices in the four states rather than sharp differences in crime rates or violation rates—they were the result of choices made within the criminal justice system rather than the result of external factors. This was consistent with the experiences of previous NIC assistance projects on the topic of parole and probation violations. It also mirrors the diversity found in a review of national parole practices by Jeremy Travis, who observes the following in *Beyond the Prison Gates: The State of Parole in America*:

Examining the phenomenon of successful parole discharges at the state level (as defined by BJS) shows enormous variation among states. . . . It is unlikely that the parolees in Utah and California, the two states with the lowest rates of successful completion (under 20 percent) are so inherently different from the parolees in Massachusetts and Mississippi, the two states whose successful completion rates exceed 30 percent. More likely the policies and practices of the parole agencies contribute significantly to these differences.<sup>4</sup>

The project found itself in the midst of an escalating focus on—and debate about—what was then being recognized as a flood of offenders transitioning from prison back to the community. In parallel with this NIC project on violations and its Transition From Prison to the Community Initiative, another federal effort, the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, provided funding for services to be offered to returning offenders. The professional journals were full of articles identifying this population of offenders as a critical issue for the communities to which they were returning.

The four states in this project and the NIC technical assistance team proceeded to examine their current practices, rethink their mission and goals, and develop practical strategies to improve their policies and practices in this area. They were working at precisely the nexus of offender transition and reintegration that was garnering so much attention nationwide. The lessons that have come out of this experience—along with the innovations developed by these states—provide important additions to the national dialogue on offender transition and reintegration. They also emphasize how important it is for paroling authorities and parole supervision agencies to participate fully in meeting this new challenge.

In 2003, Joan Petersilia published her comprehensive volume, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*. Among Petersilia's central recommendations are the revitalization of discretionary parole release and a renewal of the traditional role of parole supervision agencies as a source of support and resources to assist offenders in the challenging task of reintegrating into the community.

The four states participating in NIC's project had arrived at the same conclusions as had Dr. Petersilia, and their experiences mirror some of the revelations found in her review of the research. All four states concluded early in the project period that their vision of parole included working very directly toward supporting an offender's successful completion of parole—no new crimes, no new victims. They then proceeded to plumb their own experiences and the lessons from research to begin redefining their violation (and other) policies and practices toward that end.



## *Why Violations and Revocations Are Important*

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In addition to their impact on prison admissions, violations and revocations—and the way in which criminal justice agencies respond to them—are indicative of larger and more seminal issues in criminal justice.

At the beginning of the 21st century, it is true that we continue to face many challenges in the arena of criminal justice and corrections. It is also true that we are confronted with a rich and well-documented understanding of our track record on crime and punishment in this country. Lively debates about the wisdom of different sentencing and correctional schemes have been occurring for a long time. Today, we have considerable empirical evidence to help us understand clearly what our past policies have yielded and to help us chart our course into the future.

Since the early 1980s, determinate sentencing, mandatory minimum sentences, truth-in-sentencing, and three-strikes laws have made up the mainstream of U.S. sentencing and corrections policy. These sentencing reforms promised a remedy for too-lenient judges, for the unfairness toward prisoners of the uncertain length of prison time, and for the arbitrary and capricious nature of parole board decisions. At the time these changes were first conceived, the term “just deserts” was used to denote the organizing principle for sentencing. This replaced rehabilitation as the central goal for criminal sentencing. The proponents of a just deserts model held that

it was time to be honest about what we could achieve. Since rehabilitation was not possible, we should be clear about the fact that criminal sentences served primarily as punishment. Andrew von Hirsch<sup>5</sup> and others clarified this just deserts orientation, emphasizing proportionality, equity, and evenhandedness in punishment. Some who embraced the philosophy anticipated that prison terms would be proportionate to the severity of the crime and culpability of the offender. The idea implied that many sentences would be relatively short under such a model, reserving long sentences for particularly heinous crimes. Unfortunately, a number of the distinguishing features of a just deserts philosophy—proportionality and equity—became subordinate to the overarching notion that punishment was the central mission of criminal sentences, and somehow more punishment became associated with being “tough on crime.” In their zeal to prove themselves tough on crime, state legislatures and the U.S. Congress continued to increase the likelihood and length of incarceration for a wide range of crimes. The war on drugs further escalated the idea of incarceration as punishment, using it even for minor drug crimes.<sup>6</sup>

A particularly well-documented, cohesive, and understandable assessment of the current situation is to be found in the 2003 publication, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*, by Joan Petersilia. This volume assembles

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and interprets a wide range of research on American criminal justice practices over the last quarter of the 20th century. Dr. Petersilia paints a picture of a criminal justice system at the beginning of the 21st century reaping the consequences of embracing punishment and deterrence as its central missions: rising prison populations, dramatically fewer resources for prison programming, a heavy law enforcement and surveillance emphasis within parole (and probation) supervision agencies, increased parole and probation case loads, and scant resources for offenders in the community.

Another dimension of our growing understanding of past corrections policy regards the collateral consequences—both for offenders and for communities—of the emphasis on incarceration enhanced by civil punishments. Many key decisionmakers within the criminal justice system are themselves unaware of the plethora of civil punishments that are levied on those convicted of felonies. Because these consequences are not imposed by a sentencing judge, but occur by operation of law once a felony conviction has occurred, these punishments have been termed “invisible” by some observers of the system.<sup>7</sup>

The result of these invisible punishments is that following their release from prison, offenders are often barred from much of the social safety net that might provide them with some support in their efforts to reintegrate successfully into the community. Access to public housing, food stamps, welfare, and other services is significantly limited, creating obvious difficulties for returning offenders. Prohibitions against voting and participating in certain types of work, and a greater risk of termination of parental rights contribute to a type of social exclusion that runs directly counter to the goal of successful reintegration of offenders after release. It is important for parole agencies who are attempting to marshal their resources

and efforts toward supporting successful reintegration to understand and attempt to address this social exclusion.

## **Parole at a Crossroads: Perspectives of Four States Participating in NIC’s Technical Assistance Project**

The experiences of the four jurisdictions participating in the NIC project highlight the situation in which paroling authorities and parole supervision agencies found themselves in 2003:

- Although release from prison via discretionary parole has declined dramatically as a percentage of all releases from prison since 1970, most states have retained discretionary parole for some offenders. And, in most states, the paroling authority is the body responsible for setting conditions of release (when there will be postrelease supervision) both for mandatory releasees and for offenders released by discretionary action of the paroling authority itself—and this is the case whether the violations are technical or criminal. In effect, parole boards are ideally situated to be key managers of transition from prison to the community.
- Many states are experiencing returns to prison as a result of violations of parole as a significant portion of prison admissions. Many of these violations are technical in nature. The violation and revocation process is typically poorly understood and documented, and very little policy exists to guide this process. As a result, the influx of violators into prison is likely not the result of a deliberate and purposeful strategy but, rather, the consequence of a highly complex and diffuse system operating in ways that are not clearly understood. The outcomes are likely the sum of many different decisions made by line parole officers, hearing examiners, and

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parole board members. All the decisionmakers may be operating completely independently of one another according to their own perceived best judgment or understanding of poorly articulated policy.

- Because of the highly fragmented nature of responsibility for correctional activities, coordination between what happens to an offender in prison and what will be expected following his or her release is very poor.

—For many years, emphasis in the correctional field has been on prison as a punishment, as a deterrent, and as incapacitation. The focus of institutional corrections has been keeping order and control over a skyrocketing prison population with scant resources for treatment. Most important, the mission of institutional corrections has been defined over recent decades as one of “custody and control.” The notion that prisons should be preparing offenders for their release from the first day of their incarceration is a relatively new concept to many state correctional agencies—or at least one that they have only recently been given encouragement to consider.

—Most supervision agencies—if not housed in a separate agency from institutions—are at least defined as a separate division within a larger state correctional agency. Their missions are seen as quite distinct and there has traditionally been little cohesiveness between institutional correctional practices and supervision after release.

- Because of rapidly growing populations, limited resources, and a general focus on punishment and deterrence as the underlying philosophy, resources available for treatment and support services for offenders on

parole have dwindled in many jurisdictions. The invisible punishments previously described create other barriers.

Against this backdrop, the four states involved in the NIC project began examining their violation practices and revisiting their goals for supervision and the violation process. Each state independently concluded that its newly articulated goal was to support the successful transition of offenders back into the community. There seems to be a new appreciation for the fact that if offenders succeed (i.e., complete supervision with no new crimes), the entire community benefits. This means no further victimization, no costly reincarceration, and at least a chance for a more stable community. Examples of the language adopted by the four states in articulating their goals regarding supervision and responding to technical violations are presented in exhibit 2–1. The theme of supporting success for parolees is strongly expressed by all four states.

## The Larger Context

In both academic and practitioner communities, discussions are under way about how to cope with the flood of prisoners returning from prison to the community. An emphasis on surveillance and enforcement of conditions has become the norm among parole supervision agencies. This fosters a supervision strategy aimed at identifying violations and quickly revoking the parole of those who do not comply. The results are predictable and can be observed around the country where admissions to prison as a result of parole violations are significant and growing.

However, a new focus on transition and reintegration has raised the following questions: What are we really trying to achieve with parolees? Should we be focused on catching the violator? Or



**EXHIBIT 2-1.**

**A New Focus on Goals**

The policy teams of the four states participating in NIC’s technical assistance project articulated their goals and interest in analyzing and improving responses to parole violations. Examples of their language are presented below.

Georgia	Kansas	New Jersey	Rhode Island
The goal is to implement strategies for supervision that result in an <i>increase in the number of offenders who complete parole as stable, productive, law-abiding citizens.</i>	Our system helps <i>offenders be successful</i> and does not create new victims.	The violations process—and our work as a policy team—should <i>enhance the ability of offenders to transition successfully</i> from prison to the community.	The mission is to contribute to the betterment of the community through enhancing public safety, <i>maximizing the productive functioning of offenders</i> , and providing a rational and comprehensive continuum of institutionally based and community-based supervision, services, sanctions, and other appropriate interventions.

should we marshal resources to support successful completion of supervision? One noted scholar observes:

We spent the last decade debating who should go to prison, for how long, and how we might pay for it, and we paid virtually no attention to how we would cope with prisoners after they left prison. If these ex-prisoners are unable to lead law-abiding lives, we all pay in terms of new crimes committed.

Public opinion polls also show that people across the political and ideological spectrum agree that the objectives of reentry policy should be to prevent recidivism and to help offenders reintegrate into society as responsible and productive citizens. Hence, there is a zone of consensus around the reentry issue, which may provide unique opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

***Section II***  
***Lessons for Improving Parole Violation  
Policy and Practice***

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## *What You Need To Know: Lessons From NIC's Work*

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It seems clear that parole and corrections agencies have arrived at a new appreciation of successful offender transition as an important goal. The next question must be, "How do we encourage success?" Again, the lessons of the last three decades provide a very promising set of experiences on which to draw.

### **Violations and Prison Admissions**

One of the most acutely felt consequences of violations and revocations of parole is that they are contributing significantly to prison admissions. The lesson of this project, however, is that it is not violations that are truly driving admissions. Rather, it is how the system deals with those violations that drives admissions. Among the states participating in this project, great variation was seen in the rate of admission to prison as a result of revocations. Indeed, at least two of the states had low rates of admission to prison for violations, and they wanted to examine this issue as part of larger efforts to create coherent strategies for supervision that made use of evidence-based practice. However, the three states that were able to conduct quantitative analyses of their supervision populations found that violations were quite common. Between 71 and 84 percent of all cases under supervision in the three states had at least one violation noted in the file. Yet, those same three states revoked from 20 percent to 60 percent of their

sample of cases. Each state made different choices about whether those violations would be handled with intermediate sanctions or with revocation to prison.

### **Collaboration**

Perhaps one of the clearest lessons emerging from the work of the states participating in NIC's project is that effective responses to parole violations and the broader issue of successful offender transition cannot be adequately addressed by a single individual or a single agency. Institutional corrections, the releasing authority, the supervision agency, community resources, employers, family, mentors, and others are all key participants in efforts to ensure successful reintegration into the community. Unless specific efforts are made to create a vehicle for collaboration, it is quite difficult for independent agencies with specific organizational missions and other stakeholders to operate in a cohesive fashion to support offender transition and reintegration. Another NIC initiative, the Transition From Prison to the Community Initiative, is an effort to assist states interested in working in the broader arena of transition, including all aspects of an offender's incarceration experience and extending beyond discharge from supervision. It incorporates a heavy emphasis on building collaborative partnerships among public and private agencies that influence offender transition more broadly. Additional information and insights emerging from

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this effort are presented on the NIC Web site at <http://nicic.org/resources/topics/transitionfromprison.aspx>. Additional examples and resources to enhance collaboration in the criminal and juvenile justice systems may be accessed at <http://www.collaborativejustice.org>.

## Effective Interventions

The conventional wisdom of the 1970s and 1980s was that “nothing works” in correctional treatment. Even though the nothing works slogan vastly oversimplified the results of Martinson’s research, this viewpoint took firm hold in the consciousness of public policymakers and the corrections field.<sup>9</sup> It opened the door to a rejection of rehabilitation programs and an acceptance of punishment, incapacitation, and deterrence as the major goals of corrections. More recent research—including meta-analyses of large numbers of studies—has revealed that some interventions have been demonstrated to work with some offenders. Indeed, reductions in recidivism are well documented in the literature. Furthermore, when such interventions are targeted to higher risk offenders and focus on their specific criminogenic needs, the reductions in recidivism can be quite significant.

Recent studies by Seiter and Kadela<sup>10</sup> and by Gaes and colleagues<sup>11</sup> continue to reinforce the conclusion that effective correctional programming continues to be developed and implemented with documented decreases in recidivism by participating offenders. In-depth information regarding what the research tells us about effective interventions for offenders and NIC’s compilation of resources on this topic may be accessed at <http://nicic.org/resources/topics/effectiveinterventions.aspx>.

## Risk Assessment

In the past, correctional professionals, including paroling authority members,

relied on their own “clinical judgment” in estimating risk to guide their decisions about release and setting of conditions. We now have good empirically based tools for assessing risk. In fact, the technology is now moving to the point where our risk assessment tools can actually identify the risk factors that are subject to change so that we can work to reduce risk over time and track those changes. An overview of current thinking about the use of risk assessment in corrections may be accessed at <http://nicic.org/pubs/1999/period166.pdf>, which provides an issue of NIC’s *Topics in Community Corrections* devoted to risk assessment in correctional settings.

## The Risk Principle

Closely allied to the reality that we now have better assessment tools at our disposal is the fact that the research clearly supports the notion of targeting interventions toward those with higher levels of risk because this is where the interventions will have the greatest impact for the resources expended. The research also argues for limiting the use of scarce resources and interventions with low-risk offenders who will likely complete their supervision without re-offending. An example of the research documenting and explaining the risk principle can be found at <http://www.uc.edu/criminaljustice/Articles/RiskPrinciple.pdf>, an analysis of a manifestation of the risk principle in correctional programming in Ohio.

## Defining Resources From Outside the Criminal Justice System

In the face of fiscal crises that seem to be worsening, correctional agencies are being forced to seek resources and support outside the traditional definition of the “system.” This perspective requires a strong commitment to collaboration. By definition, if correctional agencies would like to tap outside sources of support (e.g., the faith community,

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workforce development agencies, social services providers, and housing agencies), they will need to build relationships and work together with both public and private agencies to define common interests and goals so that specific initiatives and services can be targeted toward offenders returning to the community. It also involves connecting with the community through community services and neighborhood organizations, including the following:

- **Employment.** Employment services are an important source of support for transitioning offenders. Among the existing resources in every state are the Workforce Development Boards created by federal legislation and mandated to provide job development and placement assistance to the community. Links to local Workforce Development Boards can be found at <http://www.nawb.org/asp/links.asp>.
- **Families.** Families are viewed as potential resources. An example of an organization with strategies for involving families as resources for offenders on parole is La Bodega de la Familia, a project of Family Justice. More information can be found at <http://www.familyjusticeinc.org>.
- **Housing services.** Housing services are another key resource for parolees. The lack of a stable residence is seen as a contributing factor to failure on parole.<sup>12</sup> Information and resources on how to link with housing resources within the community are provided on the Corporation for Supportive Housing site at <http://www.csh.org>. The Corporation for Supportive Housing supports the development of accessible and supportive housing for different populations, including ex-offenders. It is currently working in 10 states, and the site provides a range of literature and links to other resources. *A Guide to Reentry Supportive Housing* also can be downloaded

from this site.<sup>13</sup> *From Locked Up to Locked Out: Creating and Implementing Post-Release Housing for Ex-Prisoners*, by Kristina Hals, can be downloaded from <http://www.aidshousing.org>, the Web site of AIDS Housing of Washington.<sup>14</sup> Published in 2003, this lengthy document is intended to serve as a training resource for community organizations involved in improving postrelease housing for offenders and others.

- **Community interest and support.** Community interest and support can be important ingredients in enhancing resources for parolees as they transition from prison. One example of a community initiative specifically targeting offenders returning to the community from prison can be found in the Wichita [Kansas] Assembly. A complete description of how the community responded to these issues to create "A New Beginning for Offenders" may be accessed at <http://hws.wichita.edu/02wichitaassembly.pdf>.

## Victim Perspectives

As offenders transition out of prison, they often return to communities in which their victims also reside. Along with a generally increasing awareness of the needs and perspectives of victims, agencies focusing on transition are considering the steps that need to be taken to inform victims and to address their concerns about safety. In some jurisdictions, agencies are beginning to focus on helping offenders develop victim empathy as one aspect of preparing them for their return to the community. The Association of Paroling Authorities International includes guidance on victim issues for paroling authorities in its recently published *Handbook for New Parole Board Members*, which can be found at <http://www.apaintl.org/Handbook.html>.



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## Incentives Versus Sanctions

We are learning the limits of punishment as an overarching rationale for criminal sentences. Sentences, even if long and mandatory, do come to an end. We still have a concern for the prevention of future crime. Some of the states involved in the NIC project have focused on the need to think about incentives for offenders to achieve desired outcomes. In the course of parole supervision, these states are deliberately defining their desired outcomes and creating incentives for offenders to achieve them. Sometimes these incentives are as simple as a graduation certificate for completing a program, but they could extend to the reduction of reporting requirements or early discharge from supervision.

## Supervision and Case Management

The recent, conventional view of the role of parole supervision is one of monitoring, surveillance, and control of parolees, primarily through maintaining contacts and tracking compliance with conditions of supervision. Experiences of these states—and the broader literature and experience nationwide—suggest that a new conception of parole supervision is emerging. This new conception includes the following:

- Supervision as an “intervention” in itself, using interactions with the offender as opportunities to employ motivational interviewing and strength-based management.<sup>15</sup>
- Identification and referral to supportive services, including mental health, employment, housing, and substance abuse.
- A more collaborative relationship with the family and community as “capable guardians” or sources of informal social control to assist

offenders in successfully completing supervision.

In short, major forces are driving change in the corrections field today. They include the following:

- The massive number of offenders returning from prison.
- The growing number of revocations of parole and parolees who are returned to prison for parole violations.
- The extreme fiscal crises being experienced by virtually all the states.
- A recognition that the primary correctional strategy of the past 20 years—incarceration, contact-driven supervision, surveillance and condition enforcement—has limited ability by itself to enhance the reintegration of offenders or to reduce their likelihood of recidivism.

At the same time, our recent experiences are resulting in significant knowledge in the following areas, which will be of enormous help in responding to and shaping productive change in the future:

- The critical importance of collaboration across the traditional boundaries of both public and private agencies to deal with the process of transition and reintegration.
- A growing awareness about “what works” in terms of interventions that can increase the likelihood of successful completion of parole.
- A growing recognition of the principles that underlie these successful interventions—the principles of risk, need, and responsivity.
- The availability of sound, empirically based risk assessment protocols that assist criminal justice decisionmakers in identifying groups of offenders who represent differing levels of risk for

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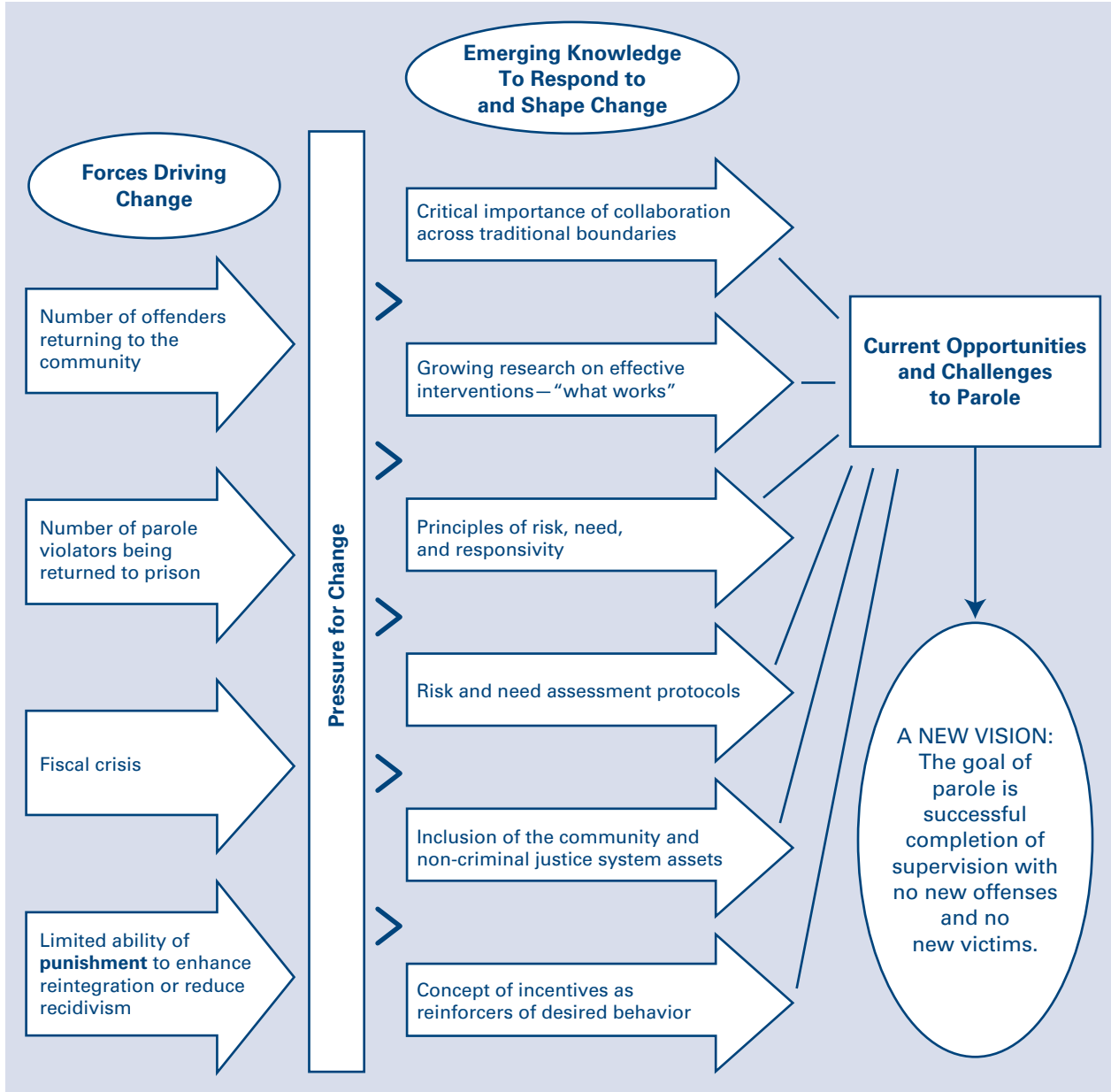
reoffending and targeting resources and interventions more effectively.

- Growing acceptance of partnerships with the community and with non-criminal justice agencies as effective means to support successful offender transition and reintegration.
- A recognition that parole agencies can move beyond the exclusive use of sanctions to discourage negative behavior and can employ both problem-solving interventions and incentives to encourage prosocial behavior.

These clusters of new insights represent a radical advance over the past several decades in our state of knowledge. They offer exciting opportunities to rethink our approach to parole release, supervision, and responses to violations. The four states participating in the NIC project provide excellent examples of how agencies can forge collaborative partnerships and bring about important change even in times of fiscal constraints. Exhibit 3–1 suggests how these forces for change and emerging knowledge converge to create a new vision for parole—one that holds both opportunities and challenges.

EXHIBIT 3-1.

# Forces for Change + Emerging Knowledge = A New Vision for Parole



## *Targets of Change and Innovative Solutions*

The four states participating in the NIC project individually selected their own “targets of change” that, if implemented, would help them achieve successful outcomes (exhibit 4–1). Each state mounted significant efforts to redeploy resources, train staff, write policy, and develop resources to fit its own vision, mission, and goals. Other jurisdictions that engage in the process outlined in this document will likely discover their own targets of change. Discussions about some of the targets of change identified by the four states, presented below, may stimulate thinking about changes to consider.

### **Clear Policy and Practice**

As has been documented previously,<sup>16</sup> a basic improvement in parole violation practices is the development of clear policy to guide that practice. Any agency should have, in its policy and procedural documents, a clear statement of its goals for the violation process. Violations should be rated by severity and risk. Line officers should have a prescribed method for assessing the severity of the violations and the risk presented by an offender who has violated the conditions of parole. In addition, responses to violations should be targeted to the severity of the violation and the risk of the offender. Options should be clearly articulated, and it should be possible to mobilize them as quickly and informally as possible to avoid delay. Examples of policy language and tools for implementing policy can be

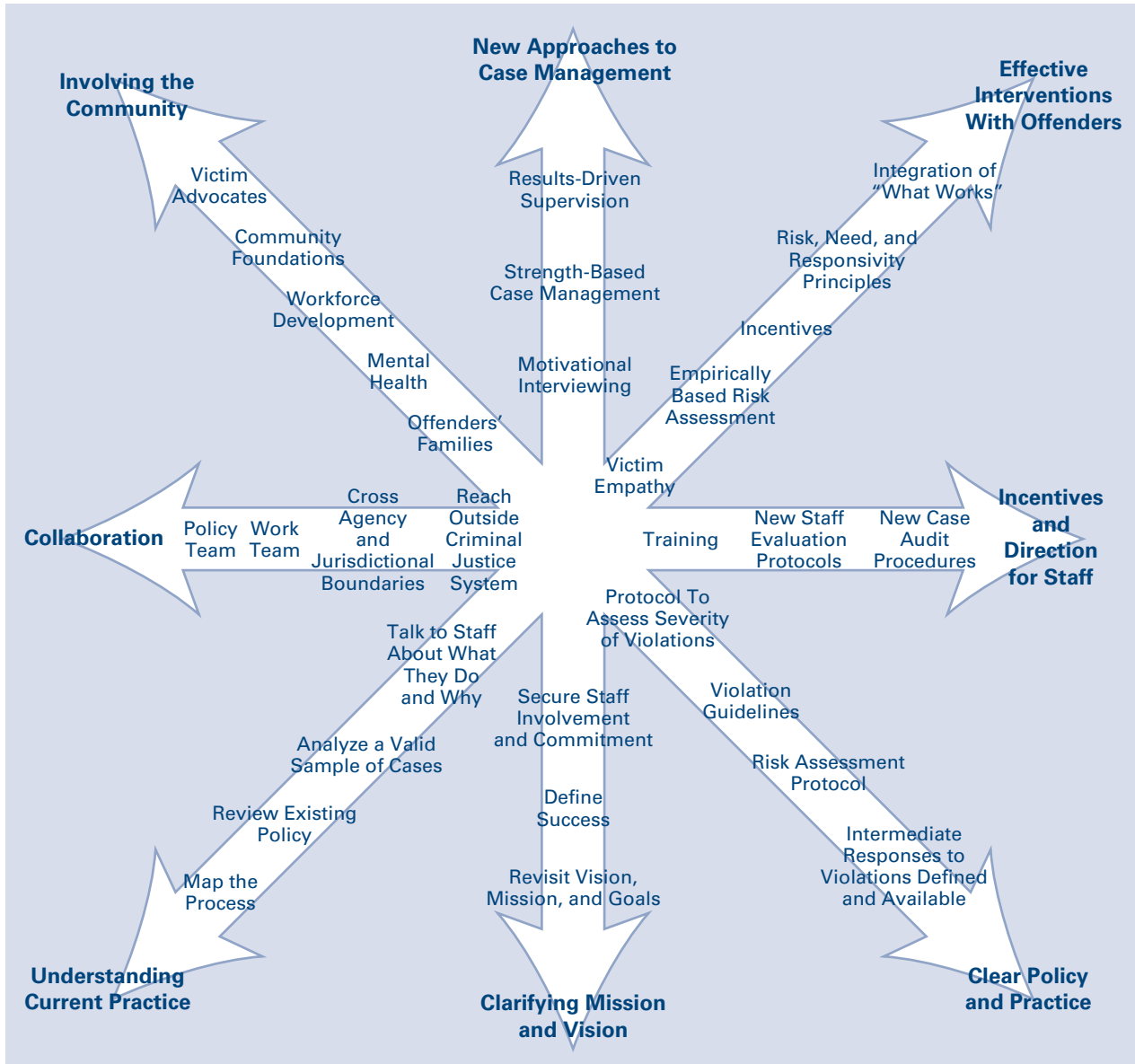
found in *Responding to Parole and Probation Violations: A Handbook To Guide Local Policy Development*, an NIC publication available from the NIC information center at <http://nicic.org/pubs/2001/016858.pdf>. All four jurisdictions involved in the project either had or put in place the clear policies and practices suggested here. These policies and practices may form the most basic target of change in reviewing violation practices.

### **Understanding Current Practice**

One of the first challenges that parole agencies face in seeking improved practices with respect to violations is that they typically have a very poor understanding of exactly what current practice is. When is a violation a violation? In some jurisdictions, no data on violations are available unless some formal paperwork is filed to request revocation. In others, violations might be recorded in individual hardcopy files, but there is no way to analyze this variable across the entire agency. Chapter 7 presents an outline of the steps an agency can follow to develop a clearer understanding of this practice and specific changes that some states have made in their systems. A major requirement in developing a better understanding of current practice is to allocate significant staff and information system resources to clearly map and document the process. In addition, a number of states have retooled their management information systems to generate better information about their practices in the future.

**EXHIBIT 4-1.**

## Targets of Change



### Collaboration

However good or poor our understanding of the violation process, one thing is clear: No one agency or one part of an agency "owns" it. The prison where an individual is incarcerated is often the source of information for both a releasing authority and a supervision agency regarding the offender's criminal history,

performance while incarcerated, and a wide range of assessment. The releasing authority will determine the conditions of supervision, which the supervision agency must then monitor and enforce. An individual on parole may be ordered into treatment. The treatment provider may be a public or private agency and will likely have a significant impact on

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whether the supervision agency receives information about a parolee's performance while in treatment. If that treatment agency elects to terminate an offender from the program for nonperformance, that will have a major impact on the supervision agency. Should the offender be revoked for failure? Should the parole officer now spend significant effort to get the offender reinstated or referred to another program? Will the policies of the state's substance abuse agency help or hinder a parolee's access to drug abuse treatment?

Once in the community, an offender's ability to find and keep a job, find and pay for stable housing, or reunite with his or her children will have a great impact on his or her likelihood of success. All of these factors, arguably, are affected by the resources, policies, and practices of multiple agencies.

Even within the supervision agency itself, how a violation is handled may well depend on the parole officer supervising the case, the opinions of the parole officer's superior about revocation, or whether a bed is available in a type of community facility that might respond to whatever the parolee's violation behavior has been.

The stakeholders around this issue are many, they probably articulate their own interests quite differently, and they do not routinely develop joint and coherent strategies about how their respective activities might support successful transition—unless they take joint and very directed steps to do so.

All of the states involved in the NIC project formed policy teams consisting of leadership from institutional corrections, the releasing authority, and the parole supervision agency. In a number of instances, they also expanded their teams to include other non-criminal justice agencies. After these teams met and set the general direction of the effort, staff teams quickly emerged to carry out the extensive work required in

documenting current practice and exploring targets of change. In some instances, this team effort was the first time these different stakeholders had worked together; in others, it provided a new opportunity to continue collaborative work begun previously.

It is truly remarkable how compartmentalized and fragmented the system responsible for transitioning offenders back into the community can be. Unless these agencies take the steps of creating a forum to articulate goals, defining common problems, and working toward change, it becomes almost impossible to make progress. Suggestions and tools for organizing a collaborative team to address violations are presented in section IV, Mobilizing for Change.

### ***Parole release decisionmaking***

Although the major focus of this effort was the supervision, violation, and revocation of parolees, teams from the four jurisdictions recognized that the methods of release decisionmaking were also critical to their work for the following reasons:

- The very existence of discretionary parole release creates an incentive for inmates to engage in activities that will better prepare them for transition back into the community. Carefully developed policy on the part of parole boards can capitalize on this incentive to contribute another support to successful transition.
- Release decisionmaking usually includes a number of assessment activities that can identify an offender's level of risk and need. This information—if passed on to the appropriate supervision agency and staff—provides a sound basis for development of a supervision plan. Sharing and using this information avoids the duplication of effort from gathering the same type of information more than once. And, of course,



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this is also an opportunity to use some of the emerging research on risk assessment and put good, empirically based assessment protocols in place.

- The use of guidelines can significantly increase the certainty about a potential release date for an offender—even where discretionary release is the norm—and allow for more complete planning of both institutional programming and community transition efforts. A discussion of the elements of a sound parole guidelines approach is presented in the *Handbook for New Parole Board Members*, accessible at <http://www.apaintl.org/Handbook.html>.

### **Setting parole conditions**

Correctional systems are typically so compartmentalized and fragmented that actions may be taken at one point in the system without regard to their implications for other points. Setting of conditions of release is a perfect example of this. Often parole boards develop “standard” conditions that typically outline what they believe constitutes acceptable standards of behavior for those given the privilege of parole. They typically include requirements to report to a parole officer and follow his or her instructions, remain drug free, obey all laws, not associate with felons, not be in any place where persons of ill repute might spend time, remain employed, pay child support, and not change address without notifying a parole officer. These standard conditions, if strictly interpreted to mean that any breach is cause for revocation, can create a situation where it is very difficult for an offender to succeed. Boards also impose “special” conditions tailored to the specific characteristics of an offender. It is often through these conditions that boards mandate various kinds of treatment and programming. Because of a lack of information and coordination, boards often feel they must impose such conditions to express their concerns and expectations. They may

have no way of knowing whether such resources are available to an offender, either geographically or financially.

At least one jurisdiction involved in this project has explored redesigning its conditions of parole to be more supportive of an offender’s success and to reduce the likelihood that the conditions will simply create obstacles and hurdles for offenders returning to their communities.

### **Clarifying Vision and Mission**

As Yogi Berra once said as he was driving to the Baseball Hall of Fame, “we’re lost, but we’re making great time!”<sup>17</sup> In the criminal justice arena, we are often so overwhelmed with the sheer volume of cases that the tendency is to keep working harder and faster. We often feel that we do not even have time to ask where we are going. As jurisdictions undertook work during the NIC project, they were asked to envision what their state or community would be like several years in the future if they were successful in carrying out effective supervision and violation responses. They were then asked to consider how their specific responsibilities—release decisionmaking, supervision, etc.—could be better organized to support that mission. It was interesting to see that many of the individuals involved in the project felt that they had experienced precious few opportunities in the course of their routine work to consider this question of vision, mission, and goals.

Project participants discovered that a unified sense of purpose and vision was missing among line staff, midlevel supervisors, and management. In fact, individuals held very different conceptions of what good supervision really meant. Was the major objective to monitor and identify violations? Or was the major objective to mobilize resources to support success?

This lack of a unified sense of purpose and vision is not surprising given the

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fact that agencies are farflung and quite large in some states. However, even in Rhode Island, which has fewer than a dozen parole officers, the team members found they could not assume that everyone had the same set of operating assumptions until they made the effort to clarify them. This is also not surprising because parole supervision has been operating under an incapacitative philosophy, rather than a rehabilitative philosophy, for several decades.

One of the significant breakthroughs in the field of community supervision during the last decades of the 20th century was the concept of levels of supervision and recognition that different types of cases warrant different levels of effort by probation or parole officers. Such standards formalized agency expectations regarding how often and in what setting probation and parole officers would have contact with the offenders on their caseloads. This was an important step forward at the time. It was helpful in justifying budget requests for agencies as caseloads grew and in communicating to officers the priority that should be given to certain offenders. When agencies begin to think of their goal as the successful reintegration of offenders into the community, it becomes even more important to consider what a probation or parole officer is spending time on during those contacts and in other aspects of his or her work. A contact-driven model does not provide much guidance to parole officers regarding building partnerships with social services agencies, housing agencies, job development and employment resources, and other areas. Agencies are faced with developing new tools and methods for communicating such priorities to line staff.

## **Effective Interventions With Offenders**

Even if an agency accepts, in theory, the notion that certain types of programming

(e.g., drug treatment, cognitive behavioral interventions, job skills and employment services, and mental health counseling for specific mental illnesses) can be helpful to certain offenders, actually obtaining access to such resources for transitioning offenders is a difficult challenge. Resources are never plentiful enough, and mechanisms typically are not in place to identify the offender's needs and ensure that he or she receives the services. Yet, some agencies are taking steps to create new systems to make this happen—some are established; others are just emerging.

## **New Approaches to Case Management**

Given a new sense of mission and desired outcomes, states participating in the NIC project concluded that the role of parole officers would be a likely target of change. Concomitant with a shift toward just deserts and a “nothing works” posture, supervision agencies in the last decades of the 20th century adopted an enforcement posture. In many agencies, the role of the parole officer—consistent with a retributive and incapacitative model—has been cast as one of supervision, monitoring, and control of offender behavior. The jurisdictions involved in the NIC project began reexamining this perspective and expanded their thinking about supervision. They began thinking and talking about a parole officer's role in brokering services, traditionally thought of as “case management.” They also began discussing parole officer interactions with offenders as geared toward encouraging change. As some have put it, this would “alter the basic foundation of the supervision agency by focusing on supervision as an intervention, instead of as a tool to monitor compliance.”<sup>18</sup> If we are interested in the parole officer as an agent of change, what does that mean in terms of roles, responsibilities, activities, tools, and resources? Participating states began focusing on the concept of case management



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to describe new expectations for parole officer roles and responsibilities and for their interventions with offenders.

In the context of this project, participating states began to use the term “case management” when referring to what a parole officer does with specific cases. A sharp distinction exists in the literature between supervision and case management. Supervision is generally meant to include parole officer activities designed to monitor, control, and sanction offenders, although some researchers are beginning to suggest that changes in the field may be moving toward supervision as an intervention in and of itself.<sup>19</sup> This new approach to supervision, similar to case management but going beyond it, has its roots in the field of social work, where case managers were originally defined as brokers of services to individuals with needs for mental health and other services.<sup>20</sup> In the parole context, case management has come to be associated with the somewhat diverse roles that parole officers play, including monitoring behavior and conditions of supervision, brokering services, and, increasingly, interacting with offenders in ways designed not simply to monitor behavior but to change it.

This is not to say that great consensus exists in the field about a definition of case management. In some jurisdictions, case management refers to a specific electronic system for maintaining assessment and case performance information, along with information on actions taken by the parole officer. In other jurisdictions, case management refers to specific actions taken in response to particular criminogenic needs identified for offenders.

### ***Case management in practice***

All four states participating in the NIC project identified case management as one of their targets of change. In Rhode Island, the team felt that the project focused their attention on a relatively rudimentary approach to case management

that needed to be developed more fully. In Georgia, already committed to Results Driven Supervision, the parole agency more clearly defined how it wanted its line officers to interact with offenders in the instances of both negative behavior and positive behavior while on supervision. In New Jersey, attention was focused on redefining job functions as stated in its employee evaluation system. And in Kansas, a significant state-wide effort was launched to train the entire field staff in a new approach to case management that incorporates risk assessment, strength-based interventions with offenders, and motivational interviewing. It envisions the parole officer identifying resources in the community and the family as assets for the offender during his or her period of parole.

If one looks nationally to changes in case management, other states and researchers are beginning to focus on parole supervision as an intervention in itself. The State of Maryland has implemented what it calls Proactive Community Supervision. The noted Canadian researchers Don Andrews, James Bonta, and Steve Wormith are working on a case management approach that builds directly upon the Level of Services Inventory–Revised (LSI–R) as an assessment tool.<sup>21</sup> Colorado has implemented an approach to case planning that incorporates aspects of the strength-based approach as well as a restorative justice framework.

### ***Results Driven Supervision***

In Georgia, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles has been integrating the lessons of the “what works” research into its supervision practices. It is incorporating a risk assessment protocol, moving away from a contact-standards supervision approach, and ensuring that parole officers routinely report the percentage of their cases who are employed and those participating in mandated treatment. The automated data system also prompts parole officers to record

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technical violations and their response to every violation.

An innovation in Georgia's parole supervision practices that has resulted from the NIC project is use of the Behavior Response and Adjustment Guide (BRAG) (see exhibit 5-2, chapter 5), a guideline for parole officers that suggests both appropriate sanctions for various technical violations *and* positive responses for desired behavior. Georgia's practices are an example of how the lessons of research are being integrated into supervision practice to support successful transition.

### ***Securing staff involvement and commitment***

As the four states involved in the NIC project began implementing their ideas about system change, they applied a wide range of strategies to ensure that staff would understand and support the direction of the effort. When the direction of an effort changes, staff can be expected to refocus accordingly only when they are fully informed, are provided with the opportunity for input, and have an opportunity to learn new skills, approaches, and procedures. Examples of redefining success, providing clear policy training, and using tracking, evaluations, and additional working teams to encourage change include the following:

- Newly restated versions of vision and mission statements and definitions of success were created by all participating states and disseminated to staff in a variety of ways. Employees of one agency received newly finalized vision and mission statements in their pay envelopes.
- Each of the four states amended their formal policy and procedure manuals, incorporating new directions into their formal policy mechanisms.
- In at least three of the four states, NIC's technical assistance included

training sessions for all line staff of the involved agencies, which were designed to convey a new understanding of the agency's mission in terms of successful completion of supervision. The training sessions enlisted staff in identifying obstacles to be overcome and assets that could be mobilized to create change.

- As has been said many times, "What gets counted gets done." In other words, the statistics that parole staff are required to report are likely to be given fairly high priority by staff. One good example comes from the State of Georgia. In a contact-driven agency, line staff are required to report how many contacts they make and of what type for offenders in their caseloads. In Georgia, line staff are prompted by their automated casebooks to enter information regarding how they are working with offenders in specific "tracks" (employment, drug abuse, cognitive programming, and education) along with responses to all violations. The officer and office generate routine reports regarding the percentage of offenders in their tracks employed and the percentage involved with programming. This sends a clear message to staff that important goals are for their parolees to have jobs and to be involved in programming.
- In New Jersey, part of the working group's strategy is to refocus the work of their line staff on successful completion of parole. This includes adding to their personnel evaluation procedures new performance measures that focus on building working relationships with key service providers and others who could support their efforts.
- In each of the four states, in addition to a policy-level team, a working team that usually overlapped with the policy team was also formed. In each state, this team took major responsibility for documenting current practice, reformulating a definition of success,

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identifying gaps, and establishing targets of change. In the process, the team developed considerable commitment to achieving its mission and provided significant support and momentum for change throughout the agency.

## Involving the Community

Parole and corrections agencies in the four states involved in the NIC project identified ways to use the community as a resource. Examples include the following:

- In Kansas, the subject of offenders returning to the community became a matter of interest for a community initiative known as the Wichita Assembly. Jointly begun a number of years ago by the city government of Wichita and Wichita State University, the forum deliberately brings together a wide variety of stakeholders around issues of importance to the community. An effort is made to gather and synthesize the best information and research on a topic as a basis for discussions. About 100 stakeholders meet over a 2-day period to hear the issues framed and the latest knowledge on the selected topics summarized by invited expert speakers. Issues are identified and working groups are organized by topic. Participants spend time discussing the issues and begin to identify action steps that can be taken. During the year before the NIC project, the Wichita Assembly began to focus on the issue of offenders returning to the community, largely because they were doing so in increasing numbers and because of the difficulty of finding suitable housing for them. As a result of the Wichita Assembly, four working committees of citizens were organized around the following topics: housing for offenders, employment for offenders, community safety, and community services for offenders. At this writing, the work of the committees

has not yet been completed, so their impact is still unclear. A full copy of the original Wichita Assembly report can be obtained at <http://hws.wichita.edu/02wichitaassembly.pdf>. Although officials from the Kansas corrections system were involved in Wichita Assembly activities, they did so as participants rather than leaders. The distinctive feature of this experience was that the community began to take ownership of some of the challenges facing returning prisoners, realizing that, ultimately, the community's interests are intertwined with those of the offenders.

- In Rhode Island, a nonprofit organization whose board of directors includes the state director of corrections has formed a community center specifically to assist in offender transition. Caseworkers at the center work with offenders before their release and, after their release, provide resources to assist in the areas of employment, housing, and access to services (e.g., substance abuse treatment).
- In New Jersey, the State Parole Board has developed a partnership with the Seth Bowden Center, a community center within the urban center of Trenton. The board has placed supervision officers at the Center and is working toward creating a comprehensive resource to serve the interests of paroled offenders.

Each state participating in the project, as it considers case management strategies in times of scarce resources, is beginning to more directly regard offenders' families and associates as part of a "network" of supervision to better support the offenders. Agencies are more likely to include significant others and extended family members in meetings to explain the conditions of supervision and to enlist their support in reinforcing the expectations that parole has for offenders under supervision.

***Section III***  
***Innovations in Four States***

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## *State Descriptions—How Four States Refined Violation Policy and Practice To Strengthen Parole*

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The four states participating in the NIC project have each significantly changed policy and practice as a result of their involvement in the project. Subsequently, the three states that had reasonable baselines for comparison (Georgia, Kansas, and New Jersey)<sup>22</sup> have observed the following:

- Reductions in the percentage of their total caseload revoked to prison for technical violations of parole.
- Decreases in the percentage of admissions to prison as a result of technical violations of parole.

All four states have implemented a range of adjustments, including a broadened sense of mission to include not simply monitoring behavior but also changing the behavior of parolees under supervision. The following profiles for each state engaged in this process include descriptions of particularly helpful aspects of the process, a brief snapshot of project results, background information on the state and its correctional system, a brief analysis of the forces driving change in that state, a description of the specific targets of change pursued by each state and how they managed to implement the changes, and examples or advice for other states interested in strengthening their parole practices.

### **Georgia**

#### ***Snapshot***

After changes in Georgia's approach to supervision and violation were implemented, parole revocations dropped from an average of 261 each month in 2001 to an average of 224 each month in early 2002. This represents a decrease of approximately 11 percent in the number of revocations among the parolee population.

#### ***Background***

The Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles is responsible both for discretionary parole release decisions regarding all eligible inmates in Georgia's prisons and for supervision of offenders released on parole. The Georgia Department of Corrections manages all state correctional facilities and provides probation supervision services to Georgia's courts.

#### ***Forces driving change in Georgia***

Over the years, the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles has made a significant investment in building what it refers to as "Results Driven Supervision." This approach is based on the premise that efforts invested in parole supervision should be directed at specific desired outcomes and should apply the lessons learned from research on effective interventions and evidence-based



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practice. Rather than guiding parole officer efforts through contact standards, Results Driven Supervision identifies four categories or tracks: substance abuse, education, cognitive treatment, and employment. Parole officers are expected to match offenders with appropriate interventions in these four tracks, based on a systematic assessment of each offender's risk level and criminogenic needs.

In 1991, the board had participated in an earlier round of NIC technical assistance on parole violations. It had conducted a careful review of policy, mapped the process, and rethought desired outcomes. In addition, it had developed a violation matrix to guide staff in the consistent and swift application of sanctions.

Based on this earlier work, policymakers at the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Georgia Department of Corrections concluded that more could be done to bring violation response practices into concert with the basic tenets of Results Driven Supervision. Significant numbers of parolees continued to be returned to prison for technical violations. Rates of return to prison for drug violations continued to be considerably higher in rural than in urban areas, at least partially because of a lack of resources in rural communities.

The Governor had established a Commission on Certainty in Sentencing, which was charged with looking at better ways to manage prison growth, and the executive director of this commission was willing to participate in the policy team to be convened as part of the NIC project. Perhaps the most important force driving change in Georgia was an interest in pursuing more collaborative partnerships with a broader set of agencies and resources. A critical shortage of programs geared to respond to criminogenic factors emphasized the need to reach out to a broader cross section of community organizations.

### ***Targets of change and accomplishments in Georgia***

Despite the history of work on this issue in Georgia, the policy team found it extremely helpful to return to the concepts of vision, mission, and goals. This clarified for them the notion of parole success being an important outcome toward which they were all working. The team proceeded to focus on a number of issues ranging from mapping the process to data analysis and a review of existing policy language.

### ***Balancing sanctions with incentives and rewards***

Nationally, as parole and probation agencies have begun working on responding to technical violations, one of the most basic notions has related to intermediate sanctions for technical violations. Rather than using the most severe sanction or punishment—revocation to prison—for every violation, one might scale the sanctions to severity and risk. This is based on at least two rationales: proportionality of punishment and deterrence. Clearly, not every technical violation (e.g., failure to report one time to a parole officer) seems to warrant the most severe allowable response of return to prison, particularly when no indications of increasing or unacceptable risk are present. The response should be “proportionate” to the severity of the violation. The second notion is that sanctions will serve as a deterrent and discourage violations.

Relying exclusively on sanctions or punishments, however, fails to capture what we know about effective interventions with offenders. So the notion of “responses” to violations emerges. When an offender violates conditions of parole, why not respond with a problem-solving intervention of some sort? If the offender has lost a job, help him find another one. If the offender has lapsed into drug use, why not get him into a different or more intense treatment setting or work

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with the treatment provider to address the relapse directly within the treatment program?

But even these problem-solving responses do not take advantage of what the research tells us about the efficacy of creating incentives and positive rewards for desired behavior. According to this research, incentives are as much as four times as effective as sanctions in changing behavior. Being familiar with this research, the Georgia team began exploring ways they could structure positive responses and incentives for desired behavior.

Newly developed language in the agency's policy manual identifies the use of positive reinforcement as an expectation of parole officers. In the manual's language, "Parole officers should seek to utilize this type of reinforcement at every opportunity when interacting with their releasees." The manual also directs that "the emphasis in responding to releasee behavior is to respond in a manner which will affect a behavioral change in the desired direction" (see exhibit 5-1). This directive to Georgia parole officers is supplemented by Georgia's Behavior Response and Adjustment Guide (BRAG) (exhibit 5-2), which provides examples of parolees' desirable and undesirable behaviors with suggested responses. The format of the guide clearly communicates the idea of a balanced approach to supervision involving both sanctions for negative behavior and reinforcement of desired behavior.

### ***Conditions of supervision***

The team discussed the fact that the standard conditions of supervision in Georgia were fairly negative in nature, focusing primarily on what a parolee could not do and including requirements such as payment of fees, among others. In fact, some criminal justice analysts observe that generally, across the nation, the conditions of parole almost guarantee failure. The work

team proposed changes in the conditions that included a focus on the offender's active participation in formulating and carrying out a rehabilitation plan with his or her parole officer.

### ***The initial interview***

When an offender enters parole supervision in Georgia, one of the first events is the initial interview. This is an opportunity to gather and provide information, set expectations, and establish a tone for the relationship between the offender and the parole officer. The team also identified the initial interview as a target of change, hoping to integrate some of their new emphasis on success with creating incentives for positive performance at the onset of supervision.

### ***Georgia change strategy: How did they do it?***

#### ***Policy and work group***

It might be argued that deciding what to do is not quite as difficult as actually making it happen. The Georgia team recognized early that if changes were to be made in the handling of violations, support would be required from the top levels of the organization to the line parole officer, including everyone in between. Their strategy included a number of elements. First, a member of the Board of Pardons and Paroles agreed to participate in key working sessions of the group. This facilitated communication with and support of the entire board. In addition, the individuals supporting the work of the policy team included line parole officers from a number of areas across the state and first-line supervisors and managers at a variety of levels.

#### ***Gaps analysis and identifying targets of change***

When the Georgia policy team began working on this project, a violation grid with guidance about intermediate

## Georgia's New Policy on Violations and the Use of Reinforcement

### SECTION 3.500. SANCTIONS/VIOLATIONS AND DELINQUENT REPORTS

(Policy 2.124, 2.104) (ACA 3-3168)

**3.501. Releasee Behavior** Releasee behavior is of central concern to the Board. Effective supervision directs the releasee in learning pro-social behaviors that increase public safety and reduce recidivism. The successful releasee meets the vision of success established by the Board. This vision of success includes, but is not limited to, a releasee who is law abiding, self-sufficient, stable in employment, supporting family and dependents, and abstaining from substance use and/or abuse. (Rev.03/03)

**3.502. Responding to Releasee Behavior** The skillful parole officer will understand the appropriate response to any behavior is a response designed to increase desirable behavior and decrease or extinguish the undesirable behavior. In determining the appropriateness of the response to the behavior, the behavior must first be defined and then recorded. Efforts should be taken to determine the situation or context in which the behavior occurred. The targeted behavior should be addressed utilizing reinforcers if the behavior was desirable or punishers to extinguish an undesired behavior. It is essential that the response to any behavior be done as close as possible to the occurrence of the behavior. (Rev.03/03)

**3.502.1. Use of Reinforcement** Scientific evidence suggests that it is four times more effective to reinforce desired behaviors than punishment or punishment alone. Studies also suggest that reinforcement of a behavior increases the frequency of that behavior in the future. This is consistent with the "swift" and "certain" tenets of Results Driven Supervision. The use of social reinforcers such as verbal praise, words of encouragement, and statements like "good job" or "keep up the good work" have a significant impact on influencing or reinforcing behavior. This type of positive reinforcement can be achieved with very little effort or time consideration. Parole officers should seek to utilize this type of reinforcement at every opportunity when interacting with the releasees. Other types of reinforcers are material reinforcers and preferred activity reinforcers. Material reinforcers consist of letters of recognition, statements of commendation, graduation certificates, and similar awards. Preferred activity reinforcers would include activities such as extended curfew hours, bimonthly or quarterly reporting and could culminate in a request to the Board for commutation of the releasee's sentence. When utilizing these reinforcers, it is essential that the releasee is aware that the reinforcer is a consequence of the desired behavior and the utilization of the reinforcers should be documented in FLOID. (Rev.03/03)

**3.502.2 Reinforcer Awards Criteria** The following awards can be presented to the releasee upon meeting the listed requirements: (Rev.03/03)

**Compliance Certificate.** Certificate awarded at six-month intervals to the releasee who has exhibited desired behavior and has no violations.

**Mr. (or Ms.) Clean Award.** Certificate awarded at six-month intervals to the releasee who has no positive drug screens. The releasee must be on the substance abuse track.

**Stability Award.** Certificate awarded at six-month intervals to the releasee who has maintained stable employment and residence.

**Lifestyle Commitment Award.** Certificate awarded to the releasee who has documented involvement in pro-social activities, such as volunteer work, church affiliation, community service. The releasee should also have stable residence and employment.

**3.502.3. Responding to Violations and Undesired Behaviors** When responding to violations and undesired behaviors, the parole officer should keep in mind the Board's vision of success for the releasee. Therefore, the emphasis in responding to releasee behavior is to respond in a manner which will affect a behavioral change in the desired direction. The response might incorporate strategies for extinguishing (punishing) a behavior as well as strategies for changing it. It is important that the parole officer respond swiftly to all violations and undesired behaviors. The failure to respond to any undesired behavior effectively reinforces the behavior. This could lead to that behavior to be repeated or increasing. To deter violations from occurring, the parole officer should demonstrate that all detected violations will have a swift and appropriate response. Violation responses should be tailored to the severity of the violation and the risks posed by the releasee. A "focusing" guide is provided . . . to assist the officer in determining the proper targeting and level of response. Once the level is determined, the BRAG . . . can be applied. (Rev.03/03)




**EXHIBIT 5-2.**

## Georgia's Behavior Response and Adjustment Guide (BRAG)

Suggested Response	POSITIVE	BEHAVIOR	NEGATIVE	Suggested Response
Verbal recognition Letter of Recognition Certificate of Completion 6-Month Compliance Certificate	90 days clean 90 days employed 6 months stable residence Completed first school semester or 30 days regular GED attendance Outpatient program completion 30 days electronic monitoring (EM) violation-free 2 months perfect attendance at cognitive skills course	<b>L O W</b>	Positive drug test(s) Program nonattendance Failure to report EM violations (minor) Assessment not attended Failure to support dependents Unemployed (short period) Special condition violation Fee arrearage \$60 or less Technical violation—other	Specific issue hearing Outpatient program Self-help program PO letter of reprimand PO verbal reprimand Increased screening Increased reporting Verbal warning
1-Year Compliance Certificate Mr./Ms. Clean Award Letter of Recognition EM early termination Certificate of Completion Reduced reporting Chief recognition Decrease supervision level	12 months stability (employment and residence, few to no violations) 6 months clean 2 months perfect attendance at cognitive skills class Completed 1 year of school or 6 months of regular GED attendance 90 days EM violation-free Outpatient program completion Cognitive skills course completion	<b>M E D I U M</b>	Misdemeanor arrest Multiple positive drug tests Multiple program nonattendance EM violations (serious) Unemployed (lengthy) Assessments not attended (multiple) Sex offender violations (minor) Fee arrearage \$100 or less	Administrative hearing In-house program Restart program EM extension Outpatient program Specific Issue Hearing Increased screening Increased reporting Verbal reprimand—Chief Restorative/community service work Increase supervision level
Commutation Request Donated Gift Certificate (GED/school graduation) Cognitive Skills Graduation Lifestyle Commitment Award Second Mr./Ms. Clean Award Reduced reporting	24 months stability Completed school or GED 12 months clean Volunteer work, church affiliation Prosocial activities	<b>H I G H</b>	Felony arrest Violent misdemeanor arrest or DUI Positive drug tests (critical) Program nonattendance (critical) Sex offender violation (serious) EM violations (critical) Possession of a weapon Absconding TRW issued Failure to attend administrative hearing Unemployed (critical) Fee arrearage over \$100	Request revocation Short-term incarceration (local detention) Electronic monitoring In-house program Administrative hearing Outpatient program EM extension Whitworth Detention Center

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responses to technical violations was already in place. One might reasonably ask what more could be done in this area. By carefully analyzing practice and considering the gaps that existed among their definitions of success, team members realized that they wanted to develop their responses to violations beyond the mere notion of sanctions. They wanted to incorporate the principles of Results Driven Supervision and evidence-based practice into this aspect of their work with parolees. As a result, they were able to create the idea of incorporating incentives and sanctions into their case management approach and to garner even further benefits from the knowledge emerging from research on effective interventions with offenders.

### ***Parole officer chat room***

Another element of the approach was to create an opportunity for line parole officers to ask questions, vent concerns, and discuss changes in responding to violations through a chat room set up for this purpose. This allowed conversations to take place at any time, from all over the state. The ground rules of the chat room encouraged candid exchange and allowed for quick feedback and clarification as questions arose.

The topics aired in the chat room fell into two categories. The first category was a discussion of the technical requirements of entering data into the board's evolving data system. Parole officers in Georgia enter information daily through an automated casebook system.

The second topic related to officers' perspectives on responding to violations. This discussion allowed the technical assistance team to understand the wide variety of perspectives held by parole officers and equipped them to address the training effort that would be required to get staff from all across the state on board with a clear understanding and acceptance of new violation policy.

### ***Training***

Finally, training became an important part of the change strategy. NIC's technical assistance project staff assisted the Georgia team in designing a daylong training that brought together field staff from across the state. The training featured presentations from out-of-state faculty and, most important, included discussions led by members of the working group. A good portion of the day was devoted to small-group discussions with significant opportunities for participants to ask questions and voice concerns.

This project-supported training was then supplemented by the agency's regular schedule of training during the year, which was tailored to reinforce the messages and support the changes envisioned by the Georgia policy team.

### ***Data analysis and monitoring***

One focus of the NIC project has been to assist agencies in adapting existing information systems to generate information on the impact of changes in policy and practice. Georgia had developed an innovative distributed management information system before the NIC project that was generating good information about the operations of supervision and violation responses. However, it is worth noting that, as part of implementing these changes in the agency, the Georgia team took measures to include new factors in the data system that would enable them to generate information on positive behavior and responses to that as well as information on violations and responses.

## **Kansas**

### ***Snapshot***

Preliminary observations indicate that the team has been successful in reducing admissions to prison that are the result of parole condition violations. In

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Kansas, revocations resulting from technical violations have decreased from 45 percent of admissions to prison in fiscal year 2001 to 39 percent of admissions to prison in the early months of fiscal year 2004. The team anticipates that this trend will continue.

### **Background**

Most offenders sentenced to state incarceration in Kansas, whether under the indeterminate sentencing structure in place before 1993 or under the new determinate sentencing structure implemented in 1993, can expect a period of postrelease supervision. Those who serve their full sentence in prison with no supervision to follow (about 18 percent of releasees) are either “old law” cases with indeterminate sentences who have “maxed out” in prison, more recent cases who are revoked repeatedly until they finally run out of time so that their last release is a discharge, or probation violators. The Kansas Parole Board has releasing authority over old law cases; new law cases are released on a date determined by their sentence. If released to supervision, both types of offenders are supervised by parole staff of the Kansas Department of Corrections. Revocation decisions for all releasees on parole supervision are the responsibility of the Kansas Parole Board.

### **Forces driving change in Kansas**

Criminal justice policymakers in Kansas had been working on the issue of condition violations (the term used in Kansas for violations of conditions of release, whether parole or mandatory release) for several years before they were selected to participate in the 2001 NIC project on violations. In fact, the Kansas Department of Corrections had developed a set of guidelines for line parole officers to guide their use of interventions for violations. The guidelines took the form of a grid that enumerated possible violations, classified them as either aggravated or nonaggravated, and

listed possible interventions for each. Despite the fact that this grid provided clear policy guidance to line officers about which violations to bring forward for formal revocation proceedings—and guidance indicating that some violations could be handled through interventions short of revocation—many stakeholders in the Kansas system felt that violation practice was still an area of concern.

The Kansas Department of Corrections had been experiencing increasing numbers of admissions to prison as a result of condition violations. In fiscal year 2001, parole condition violators made up 44.4 percent of total admissions to prison compared with new court commitments, which made up 26.7 percent of the total admissions. (Probation condition violators accounted for 22.2 percent of admissions, and violators with new sentences and Interstate Compact admissions made up another 6 percent.) So, despite the violation grid that specifically allowed responses short of revocation, the numbers were continuing to grow.

### **Targets of change and accomplishments in Kansas**

Policymakers in Kansas also wanted to shift the focus of supervision from an exclusive interest in contacts and compliance to one that incorporated the lessons of the “what works” research and incorporated the use of validated assessment protocols to evaluate offenders’ risks and needs. In the words of the Kansas Department of Corrections Deputy Secretary for Community and Field Services:

[W]e started changing the philosophy for working with offenders from “trail them, nail them, and jail them” to assisting offenders to change. We changed the Sanctions Grid from including entirely punitive and prescriptive responses to violations to including rewards for positive behavior

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and more discretion in how to respond to violation behavior.

The goal of the Kansas Department of Corrections is to move toward a comprehensive risk reduction model both in the community and in correctional facilities. Work related to the issue of condition violators was done in this broader context.

### ***Moving toward evidence-based practice***

Recent efforts in Kansas to embrace evidence-based practice provide an informative context in which to view the state's efforts on the NIC violation project. The Kansas Department of Corrections had already committed to a significant effort to integrate empirically validated risk and needs assessments at various points in the process. The violations project brought this commitment to evidence-based practice to the arena of supervision and responses to violations. As team members worked through the implications for this perspective, they developed a chart that summarized the characteristics of supervision as it currently existed versus how it might look if evidence-based concepts were implemented. Exhibit 5-3 presents an interesting comparison between parole officers' functions under an evidence-based vs. a non-evidence-based approach.

### ***Building on other changes in the system***

Kansas also was interested in revisiting violation policy because a number of efforts already under way were directed at transforming the operations of the Kansas Department of Corrections, the Kansas Parole Board, and sister agencies toward evidence-based practice. To move forward coherently, violation policy and practice needed to be reshaped as part of this overall state effort. These parallel initiatives included the following:

- An initiative by the Kansas Sentencing Commission to introduce a coherent strategy of assessing offender risks and needs using similar protocols from the time an offender first enters the criminal justice system through supervision, incarceration if ordered, and eventual discharge.
- A focus on offender reentry supported by grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
- A multiagency effort to enhance successful transition of sex offenders from prison to the community and to ensure appropriate safeguards for the community.
- A multidisciplinary effort to enhance knowledge, specialization, and services for offenders with disabilities and a similar effort that focuses on substance abuse services.
- A focus on offenders with mental illness, including establishing specialized positions in correctional facilities and among field staff, through a partnership and joint funding effort with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, and applying and being accepted for the technical assistance provided through NIC and the Council of State Governments.
- A focus on offender workforce development through specialized training and procurement of new resources to establish offender job specialists throughout the state in the One-Stop Delivery Centers of the Workforce Investment Board and pursuit of grant funds for training of incarcerated veterans.

### ***The community as a resource***

In addition to these public agency efforts, a longstanding community resource, the Wichita Assembly, had begun to focus on offenders returning from prison to the community as an

**EXHIBIT 5-3.**

**Kansas: A New Approach to Supervision:  
What Will the Work Look Like?**

Now	New Approach
Assessments are static and brief, mainly focused on risk.	Assessments are dynamic and comprehensive; they address both risk and criminogenic needs and measure change.
Offender reports to agent; many contacts are made in the office.	Parole officers are able to spend more time in the field and community making contacts that address crime-producing risk/needs.
Caseloads do not vary remarkably between risk levels.	High-risk caseloads are defined in relationship to the criminogenic need reflected in the LSI-R and are smaller, averaging 35; low-risk caseloads are larger and may be as high as 200.
Emphasis is on the contact being made.	Emphasis is on the substance of the contact (e.g., whether it is relevant to the case plan, whether it is done effectively with the parole officer (PO) seeing himself or herself as an agent of change, and whether the PO is given the tools for effective interventions). Focus is on the quality rather than the frequency of contacts.
Focus of the supervision plan is risk management.	Focus of the supervision plan is targeting crime-producing needs to lower the risk of recidivism. The supervision plan becomes the roadmap that drives the supervision process.
PO makes contact alone or with one other PO.	PO makes contact with a team, working with supervisors, other POs, police, and community partners.
Limited sanctions are available, so violations often result in revocation.	Graduated sanctions and rewards are available and are imposed quickly. Emphasis is on responding to violations in the least restrictive manner without jeopardizing public safety. Fewer violations occur when crime-producing behavior is the focus of the supervision plan.
Unemployed offenders are encouraged to look for work.	PO in partnership with community workforce staff assists the offender in job search and placement. Specialists support this as resources are found to hire the offender.
Evaluations of POs are based on meeting contact standards.	Evaluations of POs are based on successful implementation of case plans, which lead to positive outcome measures.
Case management is often reacting to a problem, usually a violation.	Case management is proactive and addresses offenders' crime-producing needs to prevent new crimes or violations.
Parole supervisors are generally office bound, working regular business hours.	Parole supervisors are given the opportunity to spend time in the field observing POs and working with the communities to develop partnerships and resources.
File review determines whether contacts are made.	File review determines whether the contacts are relevant to the case plan, whether they are driven by assessed crime-producing needs, and whether the content of the contacts is consistent with effective practices.
Staff members are trained in procedures, processes, and rules.	Staff members are trained in and have a working familiarity with evidence-based practices and are familiar with effective interventions.
Technology is used as it is available.	Technology is available, used to support the case plan, and relevant to effective interventions.
Programs are the responsibility of others, and generally provided through the Kansas Department of Corrections.	POs are familiar with programs, have input into the development of programs, and are familiar with the programs and resources in their communities.
Supervision plans are "one size fits all" and largely disregarded.	Supervision plans are based on the assessed crime-producing needs of the offenders, reflect realistic and relevant goals, and drive case management.
Case managers are generally isolated from processes and information related to working with victims and are not entirely comfortable responding to victims or their concerns, including issues related to confidentiality.	Case managers are trained and knowledgeable about victim issues, comfortable with issues related to confidentiality, and have tools to respond effectively to victims and their concerns as part of case management.
Persons other than POs generally perform group work, such as cognitive training, if at all.	POs participate in group work, cognitive training, and similar activities to address the needs of offenders and families.



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issue of significant community concern. The assembly initiated efforts to enhance housing, employment, and the safe transition of offenders from prison, particularly to communities in the area surrounding Wichita. A similar effort is now under way in Kansas City, Kansas.

The NIC project provided an opportunity to revisit the state's violation policy and practice in the context of larger efforts to reshape incarceration and postrelease supervision and to ensure community safety by supporting successful transition from prison to the community. Processes chosen by the Kansas Department of Corrections and supported by the Kansas Parole Board included the following:

- Adoption of the Level of Services Inventory–Revised (LSI–R) as a risk and needs assessment tool that would be used at a number of key assessment points as offenders moved through the system.
- Training of all relevant departmental staff in use of the LSI–R.
- Adoption of a case management strategy based less on contacts and surveillance and more on effective interventions with offenders to enhance the likelihood of successful completion of parole. This included a comprehensive overhauling of key policies related to supervision standards, response to behaviors (including interventions), classification, contact strategies, case planning, and administrative/case file review. It also involved establishing different auditing, reporting, and communication strategies for a wide open flow of timely, comprehensive, and relevant information between parole supervisors and agency/division managers.

### ***Case management***

A redefinition of the principles and goals of supervision logically led the

Kansas team to focus on case management. How best should parole officers manage their cases in support of this new concept? Again, the team invested significant effort in redefining exactly what a case plan would look like and in laying out guidance for staff. A substantial investment in training all line staff in the strength-based approach and in motivational interviewing also occurred as a spinoff of this effort.

### ***Policy change***

As noted earlier, Kansas already had a violation policy grid in place outlining interventions that increased the intrusiveness of supervision or served as some sort of punishment as violations became more serious. All aggravated violations, with the exception of those related to employment and education, indicated revocation as one of the response options, although other options existed for some.

One person on the department staff indicated that although the grid had been put in place, staff members were still unclear regarding the purposes and philosophy that would have enabled them to use the grid as intended. The chair of the parole board indicated that, in her opinion, line officers always opted for the most intensive disposition possible in any category. Furthermore, the interventions offered on the grid were determined solely by the violation with no structured provision to account for the varying levels of risk presented by parolees.

Sentencing guidelines had resulted in a higher percentage of person offenders in the prison population and then a higher percentage of more serious offenders on supervision, which made parole officers naturally less tolerant of any noncompliance. On the other hand, parole officers have experienced decreasing caseloads in recent years, partly because the length of supervision has decreased. More time



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to closely supervise also tends to generate a higher level of known violations.

One of the factors that makes the situation in Kansas somewhat unique is that the length of supervision has been decreasing, and the law limits the amount of time that any person can be imprisoned as a result of a parole violation at any one time—and in total. Building on its work on revisiting vision, mission, and goals, the policy team redrafted the policy regarding violations to integrate the notion of risk reduction and to clearly articulate the goal of trying to work with the offender in the community whenever possible while still protecting community safety.

The Kansas team has been careful to codify the changes they have agreed on in the formal policy documents of the department. In 2003, the department issued amendments of the following formal policy documents: Offender Risk Management–Classification Levels, Contact Standards, Case Plan–Development Implementation, and Encouraging Pro-Social Behavior and Responding to Violations. Discussions of these topics can be found in various sections of this handbook. It is essential that such guidance be codified in formal policy language and documents.

### ***Ability to measure progress***

A key focus of this round of the NIC technical assistance effort was to enable participating states to enhance their ability to track progress on the violation issue. As the states determine how they would like to change practices to generate specific outcomes (for example, a reduced number of parolees revoked to prison as a result of technical violations), they must be able to actually measure changes in that outcome to determine whether their efforts have succeeded or additional changes are needed.

One important step taken by the Kansas team was to consider the outcomes

they would hope to see if they were successful in changing supervision, case management, and violation practices to more directly advance their stated goal of supporting offenders' successful completion of supervision. They concluded that the measure of that success would include a decrease in the percentage of cases under supervision to which the following conditions apply:

- They are revoked as a result of condition violations.
- They are revoked as a result of new convictions.
- They abscond during the supervision period.
- They show positive drug tests.

At the same time they concluded that the measure of that success would also include increases in the following:

- Prompt responses to any violation (e.g., within 3 days).
- Restitution paid.
- Offender employment.
- Average length of offender employment.
- Average length of time in the community before revocation.

The Kansas team reviewed the content of both of the automated systems providing information to the department and concluded that, in combination, the systems had the necessary data to generate reports on these outcome measures. Project staff worked with the team to define new output reports to measure progress for each performance measure. The reports for each measure would be produced for the state overall and then disaggregated, first by region and then, within regions, by district.

The interesting lesson from Kansas is that, although many states currently may not be generating useful information

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about violations, it may be quite possible to do so without major infusions of new resources or the redesign of information systems. In Kansas, by simply defining what was needed, the agency was able to respond with new, targeted information to track performance changes that occurred as a result of policy and practice changes.

What was essential, however, was a team of interested policymakers and staff from many levels in the system who were able to identify the need for such information and work carefully to define precisely what information was desired and required to measure progress. Barriers included the lack of enough integration between facilities and parole processes, staff morale and buy-in, media education and legislative education about issues, management information system limitations, and limited resources.

### ***Kansas change strategy: How did they do it?***

Beginning with a policy team retreat, the work of the project included defining vision, mission, and goals for parole supervision and revocation practices in the future; creating a map of the violation process from the time of admission to prison until discharge; completely reviewing all existing policies and procedures relating to supervision, condition violations, and revocation; and conducting a quantitative analysis of a sample of parolees under supervision during calendar year 2001.

### ***Forming a policy team***

Led by the chair of the Kansas Parole Board and the Secretary of Corrections, the Kansas policy team included all three deputy secretaries of corrections, parole directors, release officers, and institutional staff, along with representatives of line parole staff and treatment providers. The newly hired victim witness coordinator for the Department of

Corrections was also invited to join the team. In addition, the director of release planning for the Kansas Department of Corrections was a key member of the team; this individual provided focus, energy, and consistent effort to keep the work of the team moving forward.

### ***Documenting current policy and practice***

One important aspect of any change strategy is to document current policy and practice. Often, assumptions exist about what current practice really is. In a large, fragmented entity such as the criminal justice system, it is quite common for different stakeholders to have different perceptions of current practice and for at least some of those perceptions to be quite inaccurate. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that each of us sees so little of the whole picture in our day-to-day work.

The implication, of course, is that it is difficult to chart a course to where you want to go unless you know where you are now. The Kansas policy team and its staff working groups expended a great deal of effort in documenting their current policies and practices.

They assembled all of their policy documents and conducted a quantitative analysis of offenders on supervision to obtain a picture of how many offenders actually violated parole and how the responses were handled. They also conducted focus groups with parole officers and institutional staff to learn more about attitudes and practices. The focus groups revealed a huge disparity in interpretation between what existing conditions of supervision meant and what the purpose and efficacy of revoking parole was. This positioned the agency to address issues through training.

### ***Training and staff buy-in***

A major feature of the project's work in Kansas was building a clear understanding

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among staff about the mission of the agency and how expectations of the team's efforts would be changing slightly. They would be more involved in risk and needs assessment, and they would be asked to interact with parolees in more proactive ways. Indeed, the Kansas team devoted a great deal of effort to thinking through and clarifying for line staff how this new direction would look in their work. For example, the team articulated guiding principles and goals of supervision and made those a part of the materials used in staff training events. Language clarifying this for staff is presented in exhibit 5-4.

Having worked on principles and goals, the team then began to work through how these should bring about changes in the day-to-day work of line supervision staff. They created a worksheet that compared current practice with what they hoped would be new practice. This gave supervision staff some clear messages about how their work would be expected to change (see exhibit 5-3).

In addition to preparing these materials, the participating agencies invested in an extensive multipart training strategy. Some parts of this were directly supported by the NIC technical assistance project; other parts were supported by other sources of funding, both internal and external, including other NIC assistance.

The NIC technical assistance project also included a major training effort, "Blueprint for Success: Effective Correctional Services," held in March 2003. Two daylong sessions were conducted, one for all supervision staff in the northern part of the state and the other for staff in the southern part of the state. Department leadership, midlevel managers, line staff, law enforcement, treatment providers, victim advocates, and others were invited to attend. The sessions gave participants an opportunity to understand their roles in implementing the blueprint for success and allowed them to learn from faculty and each

other about how the principles of evidence-based practice would affect their work. In addition to presentation sessions, participants were divided into groups of 10 to 15 to elicit their reactions to the information being presented, to draw them out about their role in implementing best practice, and to identify the additional information they needed to be part of implementing the blueprint for success.

A major feature of the project's work in Kansas was building a clear understanding among staff members about the agency's risk reduction mission. Staff members also were to understand that their roles and expectations regarding their performance would be guided by the risk reduction model. This was a significant change from the more risk-containment-focused model and practices of the past. The chair of the parole board, the director of field services, and the regional director were present for the training. The Secretary of Corrections, who was unable to attend because of legislative business, videotaped his message to the participants, speaking in earnest and persuasive language about how truly different this approach was going to be and how important their roles would be in making the effort a success.

Since that time, the Kansas Department of Corrections has embarked on a major training initiative involving all field staff. The training has focused on developing skills to implement a strength-based approach to supervision.

## **New Jersey**

### ***Snapshot***

From the beginning, the New Jersey team was interested in reducing the number of admissions to prison that occurred as a result of parole revocation. By midway through the 2003 fiscal year (December 29, 2002), the New Jersey State Parole Board reported 2,178 revocations for the

## Principles of Supervision

An offender's behavior can be affected.

Supervision should be strength based with individual goals.

Supervision should be guided by principles of risk, need, responsivity, professional discretion, and program integrity.

## Goals of Supervision

1. Supervision helps offenders be successful.
2. Stakeholders understand and support what we do.
3. Staff are well trained, informed, and understand the goals, principles, and purpose of supervision.
4. We have consistent, equitable, and fair violation and revocation policies statewide.
5. We make decisions based on a valid, dynamic risk/needs instrument.
6. We have a continuum of options available that may be applied to individual offenders.
7. We have individual goals for offenders that are meaningful and achievable and that shape the supervision plan.
8. We have established methods for identifying and accessing community resources.
9. All individuals and organizations working with offenders have shared and are sharing the information needed to do their work.
10. Accurate, complete, and timely information and data are available for evaluation and decision-making.
11. Decisions about supervision take into account the victims.

## Definitions

**Case Management:** The combination of supervision, treatment strategies, and resources needed to implement the supervision plan.

**Case Planning:** The plan by which the parole officer monitors and holds the offender accountable and addresses risk and needs through risk reduction practices and through established and specific goals tied to criminogenic risk factors, intervention, and responding to behaviors, all to help the offender succeed.

### **Success:**

**In case management:** Measurable progress in reaching individual and program goals that can be measured and acknowledged, and no violations of conditions of supervision are present.

**In reducing recidivism:** No return to incarceration and no new criminal violations.

**Overall:** An offender's reintegration into the community as a productive and law-abiding citizen.

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year. For the corresponding period of the 2004 fiscal year, the board reported only 1,692 revocations for the year, a decrease of 486 revocations or 22.3 percent.

### ***Background***

New Jersey policymakers already had been focusing on parole violation and revocation issues before their involvement in the NIC technical assistance project. A number of years before the project, an independent study had been conducted to clarify the relationship between prison capacity at the state and local levels and sentencing and parole revocation policies and practices. According to New Jersey's application for participation in the NIC project, "the study found that the return of parole violators to prison and jail was a major contributing factor to prison overcrowding and increased prison construction." The study estimated that roughly half of those returned to prison in New Jersey for parole violations were technical violators and had not been charged with a new crime.

### ***Forces driving change in New Jersey***

In September 2001, state law transferred field parole supervision from the New Jersey Department of Corrections to the New Jersey State Parole Board. The recently appointed chairman of the board, who had built a 30-year career in parole supervision, was anxious to reopen the issue of parole violations and revocations. He had identified varying rates of revocation from different parts of the state as indicative of inconsistent practice and the need for overall policy guidance on the issue. In parallel, the board joined the Greater Newark Safer Cities Initiative, begun by the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice, which included monthly meetings of offenders with the parole board chair, parole

officers, and family and community members. The intent was to increase accountability and compliance with the conditions of supervision and at the same time help parolees overcome obstacles they encountered in the course of supervision.

### ***Targets of change and accomplishments in New Jersey***

The New Jersey working team, a subcommittee of the interagency policy team that had begun the effort, identified a number of targets for change in their parole violations and revocation practices, including reducing admissions to prison for parole violations. Other targets of change included clarifying the agency's vision, mission, and goals; identifying additional resources for parolees in the community that would help support their successful completion of parole; developing training and supervision approaches for line staff that would reinforce expectations about how they should anticipate and respond to violations; and developing clear policy for staff about responses to violations. Unfortunately, midway through the initiative, the chair of the parole board resigned and months elapsed before a new chair was named and confirmed. However, even in the absence of a designated policy leader for the effort, staff continued their developmental work.

### ***Clarification of vision, mission, and goals***

Based on work completed by the policy team at an NIC project workshop during summer 2002, new statements of vision, mission, and goals were developed for the State Parole Board. A major focus of this work was stating the importance of promoting successful offender reintegration. The new statements were transmitted to every employee of the State



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Parole Board by spring 2003. This represented a major refocus for some in the agency who viewed themselves as primarily oriented toward surveillance and the enforcement of conditions.

### ***Policy changes***

The board has modified its administrative code regarding parole violations to introduce the concept and use of graduated sanctions that favor using the least restrictive sanction necessary to address the violation behavior. The board has been reviewing all parole violations following issuance of warrants and has been able to divert significant numbers of these cases into treatment options and out of the formal revocation process.

### ***Enhancing resources for parolees in the community***

During fall 2002, in collaboration with the Newark Housing Authority and the Newark Police Department, the New Jersey State Parole Board joined an initiative known as the Seth Boyden Community Resource and Cultural Center. Seth Boyden, a public housing community in inner-city Newark, had been plagued by drug dealing, gang activity, and violence. At the invitation of local community organizations and the Dayton Street School, these agencies came together to create a center that offers law enforcement support, social services, HIV testing, counseling and education, computer training, credit repair, financial management classes, employment services, and other services. More recently, the New Jersey Department of Labor has located dedicated staff at the center. Parole officers onsite are charged with identifying and maintaining catalogs of community resources, using a team approach to supervise parolees who reside in the community, providing social services referrals and followup, developing a network of treatment and social services providers, and fostering business and economic growth in the

area. This initiative has been so successful that the board and its partners are close to launching a similar initiative in the city of Camden. (Information about the Seth Boyden Center can be found at <http://www.njn.net/workforce/prison411/411general.htm>.)

### ***Development of training and supervision approaches for parole staff***

Early in its work on the violation and revocation issue, the New Jersey team realized that its employee performance review system, built on the requirement for parole officers to meet certain contact standards, was inconsistent with newly emerging expectations for parole officers as agents of change. A new approach to supervision, which included intervening with offenders to encourage successful reintegration, would require parole officers to spend time identifying community resources, anticipating problems with offenders, and interacting with offenders in ways that would generate certain outcomes (e.g., higher rates of employment, lower rates of drug use, higher participation in treatment and prosocial activities). The existing structure would require significant changes.

The team began focusing on three issues: training for staff, the casebook review process, and the agency's Performance Assessment Review (PAR) system (exhibit 5-5). The PAR system has been revised to include the following:

- An approach that emphasizes "responding" to violations rather than "prosecuting" violations, as articulated in the existing review process.
- Job responsibilities that include "develop[ing] and maintain[ing] relationships with the community in an effort to balance the needs of the parolee and public safety."
- Training on "evidence-based interventions, such as effective sex offender supervision, motivational interviewing



**EXHIBIT 5-5.**

**New Jersey: Exploring Changes in Staff Performance and Expectations**

The New Jersey team explored a number of changes, including reworking the Performance Assessment Review (PAR) system, to support a new approach to parole supervision, violations, and revocations. Existing PAR language and modifications considered by the team are contrasted below to show how parole supervision might be viewed differently.

Current PAR Language	Possible Changes in PAR Language
<p><b>Job Responsibility: Caseload monitoring and supervision.</b> Home, office, and collateral contacts are to be made in accordance with current Division policy. . . .</p>	<p><b>Job Responsibility: Risk assessment, service planning, and case management.</b> Establish rapport and trust with the parolee to assess risk and needs through a standardized tool. Engage and motivate the parolee to address identified problem areas . . . .</p>
<p><b>Job Responsibility: Prosecuting parole violations.</b> Essential Criteria: When violations occur, files warrant where applicable and submits probable cause reports in a timely fashion. Responsible for producing needed evidence and witnesses to testify at all proceedings.</p>	<p><b>Job Responsibility: Responding to parole violations.</b> Essential Criteria: Properly identifies, assesses, and documents violations and responds with appropriate behavioral consequences that may include graduated sanctions. In the event that violation is necessary, officer shall properly prepare and prosecute a complete case to achieve the district objectives. Responsible for producing needed evidence and witnesses to testify at all proceedings.</p>
<p><b>Job Responsibility: Maintain liaison with other law enforcement, community, and allied agencies.</b> Essential Criteria: Participates in community policing efforts with other law enforcement agencies. Develops and maintains a professional relationship with appropriate agencies involved in the assistance of the parolee in various aspects of his social, economic, and emotional adjustment. Demonstrates thorough knowledge of current available options, including educational, physical, mental, alcohol, and narcotics treatment. Establishes appropriate contacts with emergency food, shelter, and job placement providers.</p>	<p><b>Job Responsibility: Develop and maintain relationships with the community in an effort to balance the needs of the parolee and public safety.</b> Essential Criteria: Demonstrates a thorough knowledge of available resources for parolees, including educational, physical, mental, substance abuse treatment, job placement services, and emergency food and shelter. Develops and maintains a professional relationship with appropriate agencies involved in assisting the parolee in various aspects of his/her social, economic, and emotional adjustment in the community. Maintains a professional relationship with law enforcement agencies, maintains an awareness of law enforcement activities, and participates in community policing and offender reentry initiatives.</p>

strategies, risk and needs assessment, cognitive behavioral interventions, coping skills training, and drug and alcohol training and awareness.”

**Training**

In addition to a focus on performance evaluation, the State Parole Board has pursued an aggressive training agenda that will enable line staff to conduct risk and need assessments using the LSI-R. The ability to complete such evaluations and then to use the results to target appropriate interventions is

consistent with the board’s increasing focus on helping parolees successfully reintegrate into the community.

**Special screening of violations for nonrevocation responses**

One concern often expressed when the possibility of nonrevocation responses to violations is discussed is the potential vulnerability of parole officers to criticism, legal liability, or even loss of employment if an offender who remains in the community commits a serious crime. The New Jersey State Parole Board is

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testing a process that would create shared responsibility for such a decision: the use of a screening panel to review violators who might be candidates to remain in the community.

***New Jersey change strategy:  
How did they do it?***

Like the other states involved in the NIC project, New Jersey began the work by forming a policy team; revisiting vision, mission, and goals; and conducting a thorough analysis of current practice.

***Mapping the violation process***

In addition to reviewing current policies and procedures and looking at existing statistical information, the team commissioned a special working group to map the violation and revocation process. This proved to be a helpful exercise that provided all participants with a clear overview of the steps involved in the process and raised areas that needed clarification and new policy (exhibit 5–6).

***Staff working group***

As often happens in the real world, leadership of key agencies in the system changed dramatically during the course of this project. A newly appointed corrections commissioner took office after a commitment had been made to participate in the project. The policy team worked to brief him on the goals of the project, and he joined the team and participated in the project's activities. However, midway through New Jersey's efforts on this project, the chair of the parole board departed, and a new chair was confirmed only as the project was ending. Despite this change in leadership, the work team continued to meet and to follow the direction set by the policy team that had initiated the project. Because of the tenacity and competence of this staff team, the work was able to move forward, and a number of important recommendations were prepared as a new chair assumed leadership

of the agency. This underlines the importance of having a credible and skilled membership for the working team to support the efforts and leadership of the policy team.

**Rhode Island**

***Snapshot***

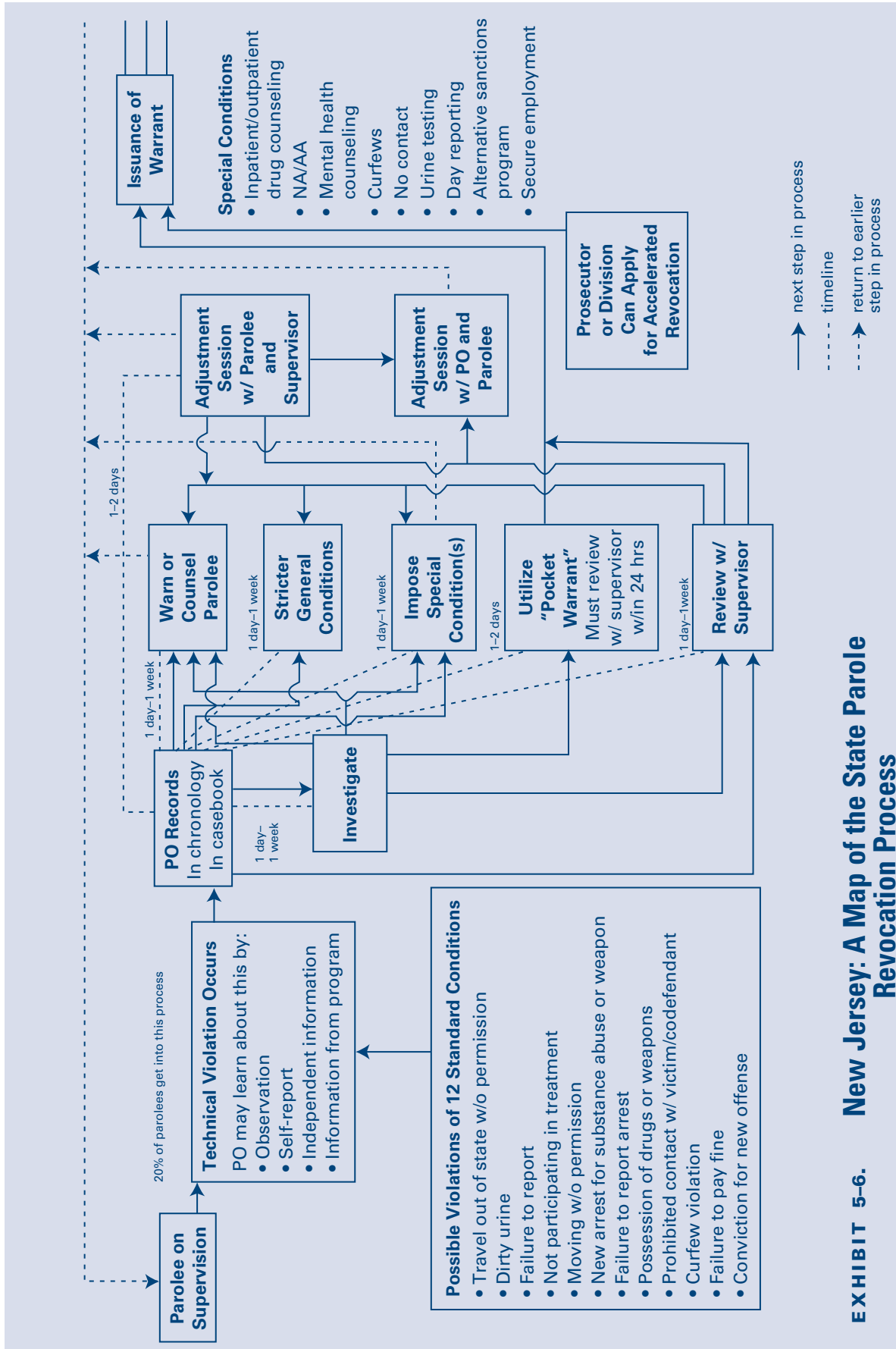
Rhode Island's data system was not able to establish a baseline regarding the number of revocations per month, nor about the number of admissions to prison as a result of parole violations and revocations. Participation in the project did help the department revamp its information system, however, and the policy team now has access to much more complete information on violation and revocation practices.

***Background***

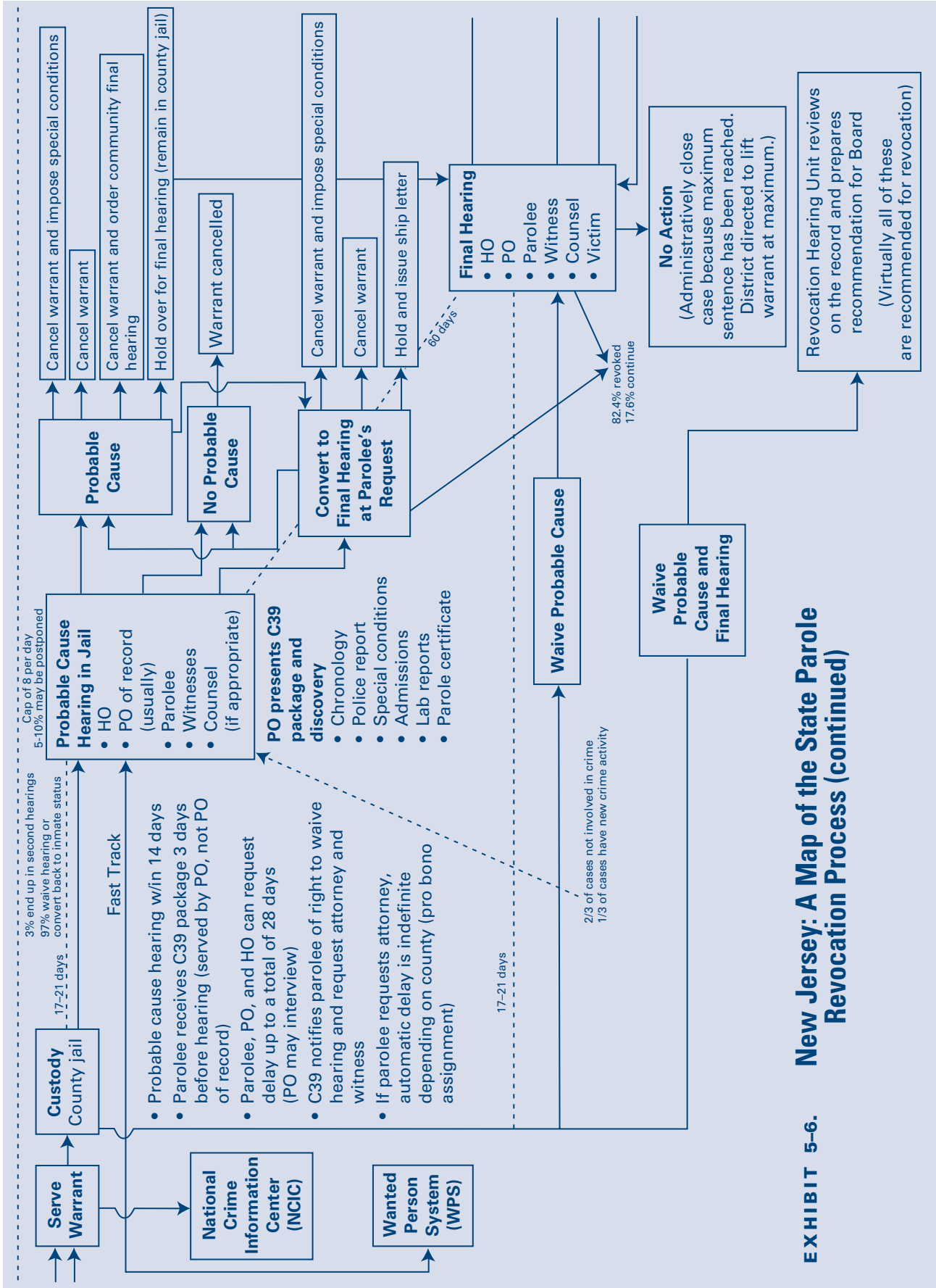
Rhode Island's criminal justice and corrections system is distinctive in a number of ways, both because of the state's size and because all of its correctional services are housed within a single state agency. Rhode Island has a unified corrections system within the Rhode Island Department of Corrections that provides pretrial detention, all secure prison services, and probation and parole supervision. The Rhode Island Parole Board is the state's independent releasing authority.

***Forces driving change  
in Rhode Island***

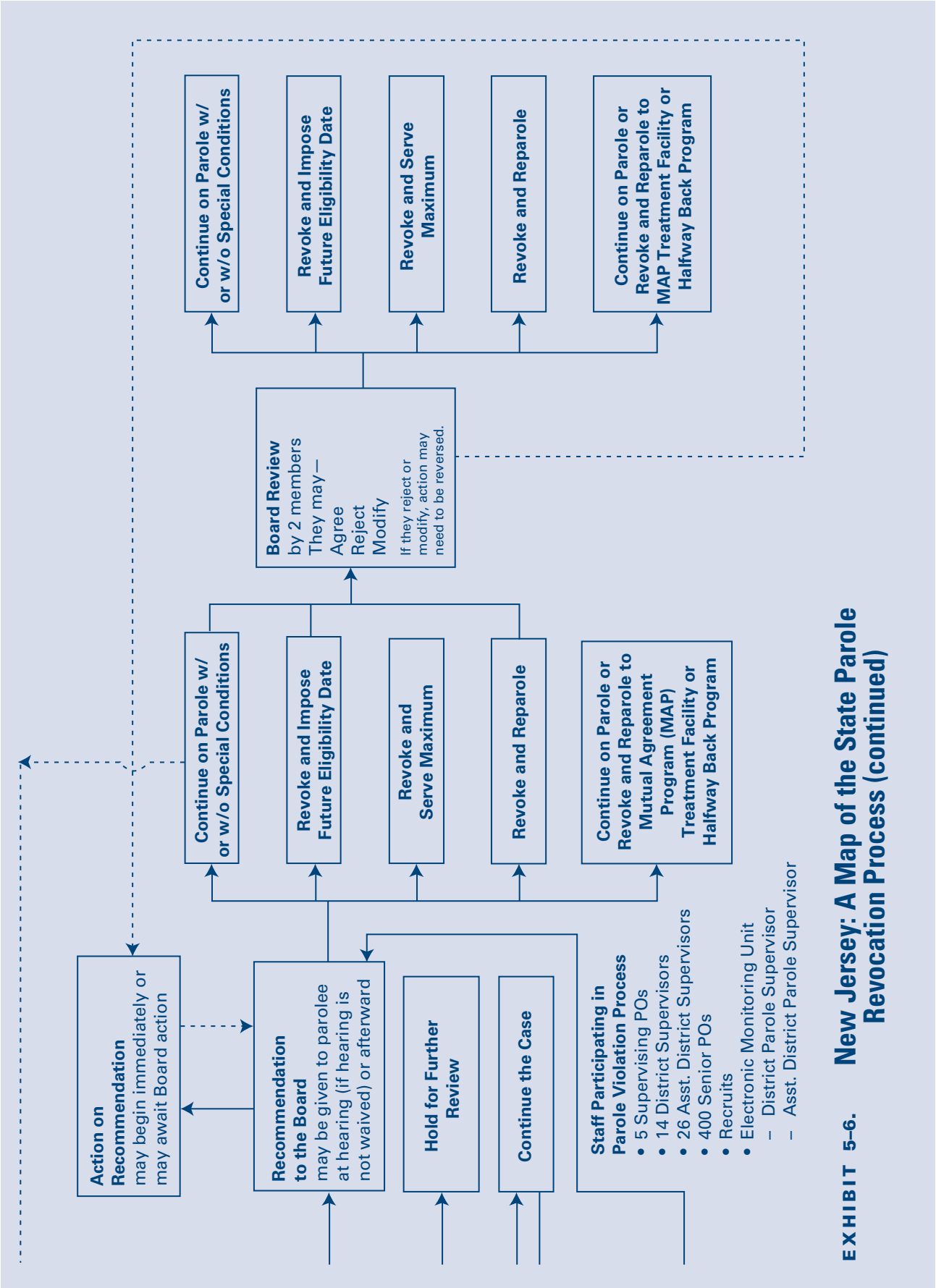
When NIC announced its technical assistance and training initiative on parole violation and revocation issues, the State of Rhode Island requested assistance, noting in its application letter that "Rhode Island is poised on the brink of top-to-bottom metamorphosis of its entire system of offender supervision and custody" and had a strong interest in implementing a community justice approach. The Department of Corrections had emerged from many years of federal court oversight of its prison



**EXHIBIT 5-6. New Jersey: A Map of the State Parole Revocation Process**



**EXHIBIT 5-6. New Jersey: A Map of the State Parole Revocation Process (continued)**



**EXHIBIT 5-6. New Jersey: A Map of the State Parole Revocation Process (continued)**

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operations and was interested in focusing on community supervision. A reexamination of responses to parole violations was just one issue the department and board were interested in addressing. However, they found that the emphasis on parole violations and revocation provided an excellent vantage point from which to integrate and rationalize their interest in evolving toward a community justice model.

### ***Targets of change and accomplishments in Rhode Island***

The Rhode Island team went through many of the same steps in examining their practice and setting goals as did the other states. They identified a number of interesting targets of change that illustrate the variety of ways in which a jurisdiction's work on parole violations evolves.

### ***Vision, mission, and goals***

The Rhode Island team's early work on the project suggested to them that one of the most important outcomes would be to clarify and develop an understanding of, consensus about, and support of the joint vision, mission, and goals of the department and parole board. The group reexamined the mission, vision, and goals of their violation effort and how they related to the missions of their two agencies. (Refer back to exhibit 2-1 for language found in Rhode Island's goal statement.) Notable in this statement is a focus on "maximizing the productive functioning of the offender." This theme emerged in all four states participating in the NIC effort. It is based on an appreciation of the fact that a parolee who successfully reintegrates into the community (e.g., remains crime free, prevents future victimization, reestablishes ties with family and community, becomes self-supporting) is an asset to community safety.

### ***Explicit policy on revocations***

As a result of the team's involvement in the NIC project, a number of key products are now available to assist the department and the board in communicating more clearly about violation and supervision issues.

For instance, the team developed a glossary of terms. As the team's work began, it became clear that different individuals were using terms with slightly different meanings. The glossary allowed the team to clarify the precise meanings of terms that would be used in the future (e.g., formal and informal sanctions for offender behavior while on parole) and the precise distinctions between terms (e.g., a new charge violation and a technical violation). Team members indicate that this has enhanced the ability of all participants to communicate clearly regarding violation and supervision issues.

Other products include a draft Parole Violations Policy and a draft Responding to Parole Violations Standard Operating Procedure, both of which will be implemented in the near future. The policy sets out "internal consistency" as one of the goals in responding to violations. It also clarifies that responses to violations should be timely, clear, appropriate, and proportional to the situation, while giving priority to public safety. The procedure outlines a matrix to rate the severity of violations behavior and the dangerousness of an offender.

### ***Creating sources of support for paroled offenders***

Rhode Island pursued at least two different vehicles to enhance the likelihood of offenders' success on parole: the parole forum and the Family Life Center.

**Parole forum.** The parole forum, created by the parole board and the Department of Corrections, was an effort born of the realization that transitioning from prison



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to the community can be a confusing and difficult time. Conditions of supervision can be unclear, the offender's reentry to the community can be a time of great fearfulness for the offender's victim, and failure can be a quick result. The parole forum, initiated by the chair of the Rhode Island Parole Board, meets periodically and all recently released parolees are invited to attend with a support person of their choosing. The chair of the Rhode Island Parole Board and parole staff, including line parole officers and supervisors, are speakers. Also in attendance are a victim advocate and an ex-offender who is currently on the staff of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

The purpose of the session is to provide information, clarification, encouragement, and insight to enhance transitioning offenders' ability to succeed on parole. A support person who will help parolees as needed and clarify the parole board's expectations for the supervision period is also available. This person's "buy-in" can be a key contribution to the parolee's compliance and success. The parole chair begins by explaining the conditions of parole release and the board's expectations of cooperation on the part of the parolee. The victim advocate provides insight into how difficult it may be for victims to encounter their perpetrators unexpectedly and explains how to minimize the consequences if this occurs.

The ex-offender is able to share his own experiences concerning what to expect and how to cope with the challenges that parolees will inevitably face. The board reports that offenders have reacted quite positively to the session, expressing their interest and appreciation. It communicates the notion that parole is not only a form of accountability but also a source of support and assistance to offenders returning to their communities. A list of the key topics covered in these sessions is provided in exhibit 5-7.

**Family Life Center.** The second initiative, the Family Life Center, was created by a group of local nonprofit and faith-based organizations that had indicated their willingness to work with the Department of Corrections and others to ensure the successful reintegration of offenders returning to the community from prison. The center is located in the section of the Providence community from which the majority of Rhode Island's prison inmates are drawn. A staff person from the Family Life Center contacts offenders while they are still incarcerated and begins to work with them up to 2 years before an anticipated release date. The Family Life Center case manager works with the offenders to identify and overcome obstacles they may be facing upon release, including difficulty in finding housing, jobs, or substance abuse treatment. The case manager can also assist offenders with family needs or health issues and refer them to the appropriate agency. The center has a board of directors drawn from multiple social services and nonprofit and faith-based organizations in the Providence area. In addition, the director of corrections sits on the board. The center's Web site describes its mission, programs, and services and may be accessed at <http://www.ri-familylifecenter.org>.

### ***Monitoring progress***

Through the NIC project, Rhode Island has developed and begun to implement a data system that can track parolees as they enter supervision and exit from it, and the state has begun to refine the system to enhance its functionality. In addition, the state has developed a mechanism for tracking violation behaviors and their outcomes at the individual case level. It has developed and implemented forms and taught officers how to use them. Through that process, it has learned about officers' needs concerning ease of data entry and has begun to consider how to make information relevant

## **Rhode Island: Parole Release Forum Agenda**

### **1. An Explanation of Terms and Conditions: Understanding What Is Expected**

- Reporting
- Travel
- Employment, loss of job
- Support of dependents
- Change of address
- Drug testing and use
- Associating with individuals with criminal records
- Electronic monitoring
- Sex offender requirements
- No possession of weapons
- No acting as an informant without parole officer's permission
- Discharge from treatment for noncompliance

### **2. What To Expect in the Parole Violations Process: What Could Happen, What's at Stake**

### **3. Obtaining a Rhode Island License or Identification: Where and How**

### **4. A Review of What Has Been Accomplished Before You Leave the Adult Correctional Institution: Foundation for Success**

- With whom are you residing?
- Parole checks on all residents of the home
- Verify employment
- Verify telephone service
- Electronic monitoring parole
- Payment of fees
- Weekly report sessions
- Schedules: Where can I go?
- And finally: In the case of distress or hardship, the holder of this permit will promptly communicate with his/her parole officer, who will seek to protect him/her in his/her rights and aid him/her in his/her needs.

### **5. Victims and Successfully Achieving Parole: Understanding Their Perspective**

- Respecting crime victims
- Needs and concerns of crime victims
  - Safety
  - Restitution

### **6. Advice From an Ex-Offender's Perspective: How To Be Successful**

- Staying positive and trying to succeed
- Making correct choices and learning how to solve problems
- Change is hard (but worthwhile)
- Avoiding old friends, areas, and habits
- Substance abuse: meetings, sponsors, relapse prevention
- Work issues: filling out applications, difficulty with employer or coworkers
- Transportation
- Child visitation/child support
- Old friends/new friends
- The "Lying Cycle": what it is and how to avoid it

### **7. We want you to succeed!**

**The Rhode Island Parole Board and the Department of Corrections Parole Officer**

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for individual officers and for overall planning and assessment. The state has begun the process of developing written policies and procedures, which will provide for uniformity in officer activities and strengthen the supervision system. It has also begun to redesign the data collection system to help manage data entry and usefulness.

***Rhode Island change strategy:  
How did they do it?***

***Forming a policy team***

In Rhode Island, the Director of Corrections and the Chair of the Parole Board agreed to cochair a policy team to conduct the work necessary to participate in the NIC project. This was a prerequisite of the NIC project. Over the years, NIC has learned that any significant system change requires the concerted efforts of policymakers working both across traditional agency boundaries and within the sometimes fragmented confines of an individual agency. In Rhode Island, in addition to the Director of Corrections and Chair of the Parole Board, key staff responsible for parole supervision, research and statistics, and intake and classification were included on the team.

Working groups were eventually formed that included line parole staff, community agencies that provided services to parolees and their families, a victim advocate, and an ex-offender. All of these individuals remained active on the policy team throughout the project.

***Policy team retreat***

In Rhode Island, the project assisted the department and board in forming a policy team that was to be the steering group for this change effort. As a way to kick off the team's work, the project designed and facilitated a policy team retreat. A policy team retreat can help a group of policymakers define its mission, build consensus about direction and role,

underline the urgency and importance of the effort, and create a cross-agency vehicle to spearhead change. Factors to be considered in designing a successful policy team retreat include the following:

- **Bringing the right individuals to the table.** Policymakers are beginning to realize the fragmentation inherent in the system that moves offenders from prison to the community and then provides supervision, services, and responses to parole violations. To build a truly integrated system to manage that process, it is critical to involve the stakeholders responsible for its various parts. NIC required that the paroling authority and the agency responsible for community supervision be part of the policy team. In this instance, the Department of Corrections and Parole Board were the main agencies involved. However, as the team's work progressed, it became clear that the outcomes would be enhanced with the addition of community service providers, a victim advocate, and an ex-offender. It was also important to include representation from the policy level and from levels in the organization responsible for line supervision and middle management. Individuals from within the prison who were charged with planning the transition of offenders were also included. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the Rhode Island team's membership is the inclusion of an ex-offender. According to the staff coordinator, the affinity that emerged between the victim advocate and the ex-offender:

... became something close to the spiritual core of the project. The effectiveness of this partnership is most clearly witnessed in the parole forums, in which recently released parolees and family members are far more responsive to their presentations than to any information or advice from the state officials.

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Their unique perspectives have helped to anchor the team as a whole and to inform the development of mission, purpose, and policy.

- **Creating ground rules for a policy team retreat that allow for candidness and for leaving the day-to-day operational business at the door.** It is often very hard for agencies to look at the broad picture of how they interrelate because they are so occupied with the press of daily business. A retreat, particularly one held at a site where individuals will not be interrupted by daily business, will help to avoid these barriers.
- **Developing clear goals and a thoughtful agenda as a framework for the retreat.** You cannot assume that just because you get the key players in a room together that you will make progress on the issue at hand. A clear goal for the retreat must be developed and circulated to the key participants so that they understand what you are trying to achieve and come prepared to assist in making it a successful retreat. Likewise, a careful roadmap of how you are going to spend your time must be developed. What information needs to be presented? Who should serve as convener? What questions need to be considered and answered by the group? What are your assets and difficulties in achieving your desired outcomes?
- **Being clear about the stakes.** Why should anyone want to come to such a policy team retreat? What is the importance of the issue to be discussed? Everyone in criminal justice is burdened by a seemingly endless supply of work and a limited set of resources. To secure the attention of policymakers, managers, and line staff, the agency or individuals responsible for securing the cooperation of retreat participants must be able to articulate the stakes involved in addressing, or not addressing, the topic at hand. In the violations

arena, many agencies are concerned about the number of individuals who are returned to prison because of parole revocations. Depending on the volume of violators and the pressures on prison space, this can be an extremely urgent set of issues with major stakes in terms of prison costs and community safety.

- **Using the services of an outside facilitator.** Running a successful retreat requires expending a major effort that includes paying attention to clear goals, keeping the discussion on track, making sure everyone is heard, and creating exercises to help participants “unpack” the issues of concern. Having an outside facilitator available to assist with these chores will enable those participating in the substantive discussions to focus on the work at hand while someone else moves the meeting along.
- **Understanding that such a retreat is only the beginning of working on a problem.** Retreats and any similar events should end with a discussion of further work that needs to be done, who will be charged with doing it, and a timeline and milestones for the work.

### *Gaps analysis*

After members of the Rhode Island team had completed their reconsideration of vision, mission, and goals, they began to analyze how their current practice either helped them reach those goals or created barriers. This approach is called gap analysis because it focuses on the gaps between what the team has set as its preferred future and what is currently in practice. The obstacles that the Rhode Island team identified in achieving their goals are summarized in exhibit 5–8. It is interesting to observe how few of these challenges relate to resource constraints, lack of formal authority, or limitations in our knowledge about effective interventions. Rather, they relate to such issues as communication, organizational

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**EXHIBIT 5-8.**

**Rhode Island: Inventory of Barriers to Change**

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Factors that militate against a comprehensive, rational, and systematic approach:

- Demands of daily press of work.
- A prevalent philosophy in the system is “lock them up.”
- Need to identify and enhance a range of intermediate sanctions as responses to violations.
- Resistance to change.
- Lack of understanding and consensus regarding goals and definitions of success.
- Organizational politics.
- Lack of in-house expertise.
- Labor relations issues.
- Gaps in information.

Factors stemming from a lack of support for sound violation practices built into the current way of doing our work:

- Lack of standard operating procedures.
- Uncertainty as to who else should be involved.
- No current means of assessing risk and levels of supervision.
- Staffing and training issues regarding LSI-R.
- Sustaining motivation, enthusiasm, and discipline.

Factors that make it difficult to focus on “successful completion of parole” as a goal:

- The traditional focus has been on negatives and failures.
- Our systems collect information on failures, not success.
- The entire system tends to be reactive, not proactive.


Factors that make it difficult to reallocate resources to support a new approach to violations and revocations:

- Labor issues.
- Community fear and hostility.
- Staff motivation.
- Lack of a complete case management system.
- Lack of immediate benefits to staff for making such a change.

Factors that inhibit a shared understanding regarding the system:

- Lack of clear communication.
- Lack of shared goals.
- Lack of positive public relations.
- Different parts of the system are not in the habit of working together.
- Difficulty in getting the message out to the public.

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culture, and the challenges of maintaining focus and momentum. These factors can be transformed into targets of change for which an implementation strategy can be developed. (See tool 16 in the appendix for an exercise to help a policy team develop a similar understanding of both barriers and assets.)

### *Advice for colleague agencies*

Interviews with some of the key stakeholders in Rhode Island elicited some advice that might prove to be helpful for other jurisdictions contemplating a new focus on parole release, supervision, violations, and revocation. First, the Director of Corrections observed that perhaps the biggest danger in contemplating this work is that agencies will feel overwhelmed and discouraged and will not ever begin. His advice was to realize that one can start this process at any stage and that an agency will find it helpful no matter how advanced or how rudimentary they feel their parole practices may be. The Chair of the Parole Board stated that some of the very basic tasks conducted under this project (e.g., the development of a shared glossary of terms) were among the most helpful because we often assume that everyone has the same understanding of terminology or current practice.

Perhaps the most urgent advice to colleagues from the leaders of the Rhode Island team is that the power of bringing the key stakeholders to the table cannot be underestimated. In the words of the Chair of the Rhode Island State Parole Board:

The collaborative aspect of the project was the most significant outcome for us in Rhode Island. Many of the team members had never sat at the same table before. Although most of us work together “on paper,” we have never met face to face, and most have never even talked on the phone due to the world of e-mails! It was especially good to have the institutional folks talking with the community supervision folks, so that each could more clearly understand the other’s needs and perspectives.

Clearly, the exercise of working together to create a common vision, mission, and goals regarding violations and transition proved to be extremely helpful to policymakers in Rhode Island.



*Section IV*  
*Mobilizing for Change*

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## *Should You Explore Strengthening Your Parole Violation and Revocation Practices?*

A major goal of this handbook has been to identify innovations that have resulted from the work of states involved in the NIC technical assistance project with the goal of encouraging readers to explore improvements in their own jurisdictions. It is true that every state is different—in terms of organizational structures, resources, offender populations, statutes, and values—and that specific strategies for improving violation policy and practices will vary markedly from state to state. The variety among just the four states participating in this NIC project is testimony to that. However, the similarities that emerged among these states and others in terms of the directions and ends toward which they felt they must move are striking. Those directions and ends include the following:

- **Being sure that the right number and type of parole violators were being returned to prison.** A major question for these states was whether revocations to prison as a result of parole violations were appropriate—and what policymakers from across the system deemed “appropriate” in terms of the number and type of violators that would be revoked. In some states, a huge percentage of returns to prison occur as a result of parole violations.
- **Achieving clarity and consistency of violation and revocation policy.** An underlying theme of the work in these four states was the need for more clarity and consistency in violation policy. These states realized that in many instances, line parole officers had little or no guidance about whether or when to bring a technical violation into the formal violation process.
- **Working from a systems perspective.** Participating states found that many of their current practices regarding parole violations had evolved without regard to a systems perspective. With a new focus on offender reentry, it becomes important to craft policy that incorporates, at a minimum, the concerns of institutional corrections with those of the releasing authority and the agency responsible for post-release supervision.
- **Paying attention to the conditions of supervision.** Conditions of supervision represent important tools and parameters to frame supervision. A new appreciation has developed of the importance of crafting conditions of supervision that will assist in addressing risk and criminogenic needs and that take into account the availability of resources in the community.
- **Assessing severity and risk consistently and effectively.** Not all technical violations are alike, nor are all parolees. Basic tools in responding effectively to parole violations are a standardized scale of violation severity and an

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empirically based method to assess the risk presented by a parolee.

- **Putting into place a range of intermediate responses to violations.** Perhaps even more basic to sound violation practice is to have the ability to employ responses short of revocation when the severity and risk presented by a violator can be managed in the community. Policy should be clear as to which combinations of severity and risk warrant what types of intermediate responses.
- **Being clear about the goals of supervision and revocation.** Perhaps the most fundamental work that any agency can do as it reviews its violations policy and practice is to revisit its goals for supervision and responses to violations. The agencies involved in NIC's project all concluded that a major goal of supervision was to support successful completion of parole supervision including, in particular, no new crimes and no new victims. This served to shape the rest of their retooling of violation policy and practice.
- **Forming a collaborative policy team to lead the change process.** Each jurisdiction found that it was necessary to jointly define goals and desired changes across agency boundaries. This required the formation of a collaborative policy team to define and lead the change effort.
- **Using evidence-based practice.** Research on effective interventions with offenders provides an important basis on which to build improved violation and revocation policy and practice. If an important goal of supervision is to encourage successful completion of parole, then as technical violations occur, it is important to consider what types of interventions have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing the likelihood of future criminal offenses.

- **Including incentives in supervision.** Parole supervision agencies are beginning to explore the implications of research regarding the effectiveness of incentives in changing behavior and are beginning to build in positive responses for desired performance on parole as a way of reinforcing success.
- **Recognizing the limits of compliance and surveillance-driven supervision.** Simply monitoring behavior and compliance with conditions of supervision will not create behavior change. Supervision agencies are beginning to define their responsibilities to include case management, linking offenders with effective services, identifying and working with offender strengths, and mobilizing nontraditional sources of support in the offender's family and community.

Based on the experiences of the four states involved in the NIC project, a review of key indicators might help you decide whether you want to mobilize for change and will help identify issues that might be important for your consideration. Each item on the following checklist (exhibit 6–1) provides two opposing descriptions of some aspect of parole practice. Which statement best describes parole supervision, violation, and revocation practices in your state? Check the statement that most closely describes your state's practices. Put a checkmark in the center if you are unsure.

Once you have completed the checklist and totaled the number of checks in each column, consider the implications. Your checkmarks in the left-hand column clearly suggest practices in your state that are consistent with changes and improvements made by the states participating in the NIC violations project.

Alternatively, checkmarks in the right-hand column clearly identify issues that

**EXHIBIT 6-1.**

## A Quick Checklist: Should Your State Explore Parole Supervision, Violation, and Revocation Practices?

*Check the column (left, middle “Not Sure?,” or right) with the statement that most nearly describes the practice in your state.*

*Not Sure?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	There is consensus among key stakeholders that returns to prison as a result of parole violations (particularly technical violations) are appropriate in terms of volume and the particular offenders being returned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are significant questions among key stakeholders about whether the number and type of offenders being returned to prison as a result of parole violations (particularly technical violations) are appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	All your parole practices, including violation practices, are guided by clear, explicit policy that is well understood at every level of the organizations involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	You have only general guidance about your parole practices, particularly violation practices, relying on the individual judgment of line officers to decide when violations are important enough to bring forward into the formal process.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	All of your practices from admission to prison through discharge from postrelease supervision have been developed with a clear system perspective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your institutional corrections, release decisionmaking, postrelease supervision, and revocation practices have been developed primarily to achieve the specific interests of each agency in the process.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parole conditions are set specifically to address criminogenic needs and to support a case plan to ensure successful transition, and excessive conditions that may set a parolee up for failure are avoided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parole conditions tend to be numerous and standard, additional conditions are often added without a clear assessment of risk and criminogenic need, and conditions are set without an understanding of whether resources are in place to allow parolees to comply.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your violation policy incorporates methods for assessing the severity of violations in a consistent way and your staff members understand how to use this assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	You try to respond to violations according to how serious they are, but have no specific guidelines about how to rank severity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your violation policy incorporates a research-based method for assessing the risk presented by a particular offender as part of determining the appropriate response.	<input type="checkbox"/>	You are concerned about risk but have no particular method or protocol (or no research-based protocol) for staff to use to assess risk as part of deciding how to respond to a violation of parole.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your violation policy provides clear options short of full revocation as responses to lower severity technical violations and lower risk offenders and provides guidance about when to use them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your violation policy does not directly address when nonrevocation responses are appropriate, and other options are available but guidance about when to use them is unclear.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	You have worked across agency boundaries to develop a shared, clear vision, mission, and goals for parole release, supervision, and revocation practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vision, mission, and goals have been addressed, if at all, within each part of the system, rather than across agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	You have in place a collaborative policy team that is working across the system to bring all your resources to bear upon the shared goal of ensuring successful transition of offenders from prison to the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Although each agency is focused on its mission and has leadership and staff resources working to support that mission, there is no credible vehicle with a clear charge to conduct such work across agency boundaries.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	You have put considerable effort into becoming familiar with the substance of the “what works” literature and are working to incorporate evidence-based practice into your operations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leaders and individuals in your agencies have very different levels of interest in, and knowledge of, the research on “what works” and your practices reflect a skepticism about “what works.”	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your correctional, release, and supervision practices have begun to incorporate incentives and recognition of positive achievement in addition to sanctions for noncompliance and lack of performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your practices rely primarily on the notion of punishment and sanctions as a response to noncooperation or noncompliance or risky behavior by offenders while incarcerated and while under community supervision.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	You have a case management system for supervision of offenders on parole and/or postrelease supervision that is geared toward supporting successful completion of parole.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your case management system is geared primarily toward tracking contacts and identifying noncompliance.	<input type="checkbox"/>

participating states considered problematic and led them to explore ways to improve practice regarding violations.

If you have checkmarks in the center column, indicating that you are unsure exactly where practice falls in your state, that would suggest a need to gather additional information about violation and revocation practices to decide whether changes are needed.

Once you have completed the checklist, refer to exhibit 6–2. Using the Web sites

identified in the exhibit, take a quick look at the proportion of your parole population successfully completing parole and the percentage of prison admissions in your state that occur as a result of parole revocations. This may provide further insight into whether or not your current practice warrants a closer look.

If you feel that you are ready to explore improvements in parole violation policy and practice, chapter 7 of this handbook guides users through a six-step process to help you to mobilize for change.

**EXHIBIT 6-2.**

**A Quick Look at the Numbers**

National data can sometimes highlight issues and provide a context for discussion in a particular state. Consult *Trends in State Parole 1990–2000* (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/tsp00.pdf>) and refer to information for your state in the following areas. This will provide a picture of the dimensions of violations and admissions to prison in your state. Information on prison population and admissions for 2002 can be found in the Bureau of Justice Statistics publication *Prisoners in 2002* at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/p02.pdf>. Record your information below:

State	Prison Population	Parole Population	Percentage Successfully Completing Parole	Percentage of Prison Admissions as a Result of Parole Violations

## *How To Mobilize for Change— Six Steps To Strengthen Parole for Public Safety and Successful Offender Transition*

If you used the checklist in the previous chapter and concluded that you have reason to review and strengthen your practices in the violation area, the approach outlined in this chapter will help you do so. Specific problems, issues, and solutions differ in different jurisdictions. However, if you and your colleagues want to change strategies to strengthen your parole practices, reduce prison admissions resulting from parole revocations, manage offenders effectively in times of scarce resources, and work toward safer communities by more effectively supporting offenders during their transition from prison to the community, the six-step process outlined in this handbook will help you do so.

The process will help you define a direction, assess current practices, identify targets of change, and work toward achieving the desired changes that have been identified. The handbook does not prescribe specific solutions. Systems, conditions, and problems are so different from state to state that it seems unwise to prescribe set solutions. A perfect solution for one state may be entirely inappropriate for another. It might even be argued that it is not specific innovations that contribute to success but, rather, it is the ability to define problems, craft solutions, and create partnerships that seems to be the most important capacity of an evolving system. The sections of this report that describe the lessons

emerging from NIC's technical assistance project and the actual targets of change selected by the four participating states provide examples and suggestions to be considered as you define your own targets of change.

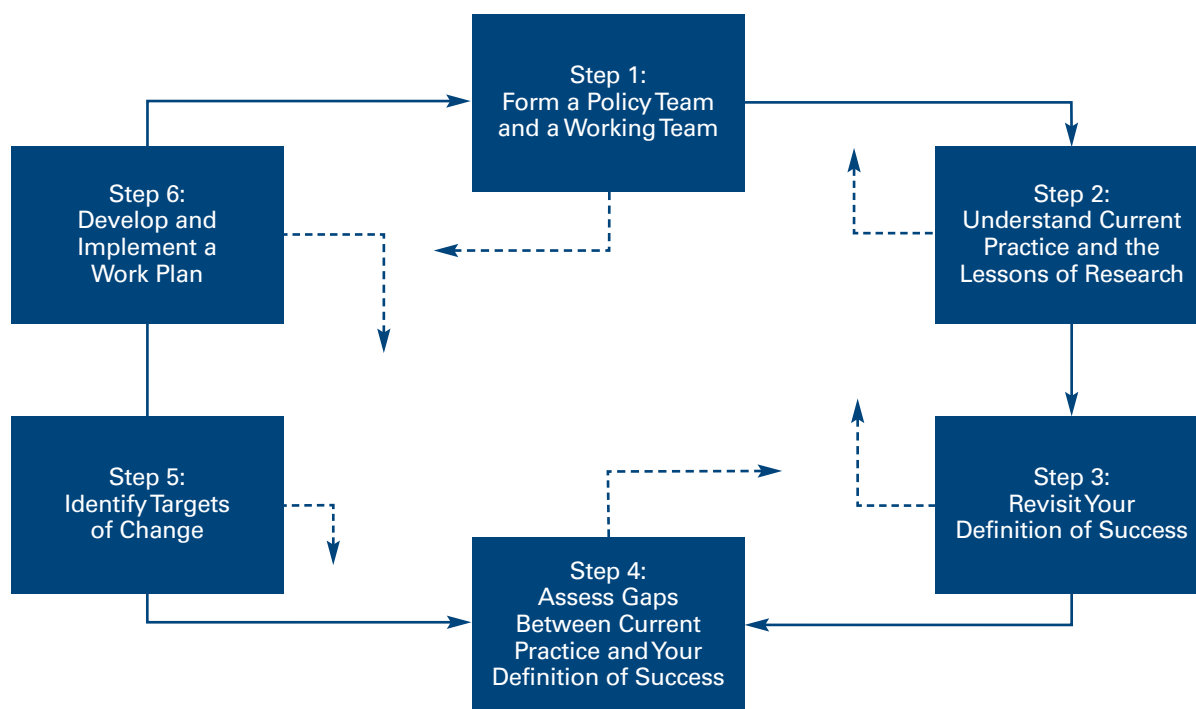
Exhibits 7-1 and 7-2 show steps that may help you organize resources to strengthen parole in your state. This process was adopted by the four states that participated in the NIC technical assistance project and yielded significant change for each state.

The process has several key features:

- **It is possible to begin in one of several places on the cycle.** Revisiting or reshaping your definition of success for your efforts is extremely important, but sometimes teams find that it is helpful to begin with the less threatening exercise of documenting current practice. Similarly, although you will ultimately need a policy-level group to exercise leadership and provide momentum, it may be possible to begin the work of understanding current practice with a staff working group first. By developing a clear and shared understanding of current practice, participants may be more strongly persuaded that it is important to form a policy team or to revisit a clear definition of success for parole violation practices and for supervision itself.



## How To Mobilize for Change



- **This is a continuing process that you will likely repeat over time.** Anyone who has worked in the criminal justice field for any length of time will confirm that both the internal and external environments of your agencies will change so dramatically that it will be imperative to reevaluate your practices and direction continually as you pursue your mission.
- **The process assumes that information is essential to good practice.** You must have good information about your own system and practices. Likewise, you need good information about new insights emerging from research.

For each step in the process, this handbook describes tools to help mobilize for change. The tools, detailed in the appendix, are designed to serve as a roadmap for jurisdictions undertaking a

change process centered on parole violations, revocations, and transition. Users are encouraged to modify and adapt the tools as necessary to define and reach their own targets of change.

The six-step process to be applied in mobilizing for change and the tools for each step are outlined in exhibit 7-2. Details are provided in the appendix.

### Step 1: Form a Policy Team and a Working Team

Change does not simply happen because one individual or a few individuals think it is a good idea. It requires the joint effort of individuals and agencies with similar ends in mind. This step in the process helps you organize for change through an interdisciplinary team composed of policymakers supported at various levels by staff working teams.

**EXHIBIT 7-2.**

**Steps and Tools To Mobilize for Change**

Step	Tool
Step 1: Form a Policy Team and a Working Team	Tool 1: Suggested Readings on Parole Violations and Strengthening Parole Practice Tool 2: A Checklist for Planning and Conducting a Policy Team Retreat Tool 3: Sample Goals and Agenda for a Policy Team Retreat Tool 4: Presentation on Lessons From the NIC Project Tool 5: Parole in Your State
Step 2: Understand Current Practice and the Lessons of Research	Tool 6: Suggestions for Mapping the Violation and Revocation Process Tool 7: The Violation Process: A Sample Map Tool 8: Suggestions for Data Gathering and Analysis To Document Current Practice Tool 9: Understanding the Official Guidance on Parole Violations and Revocations: A Checklist of Items To Review
Step 3: Revisit Your Definition of Success	Tool 10: Revisiting Your Definition of Success for Responding to Parole Violations in Your State: Suggested Team Work Session
Step 4: Assess Gaps Between Current Practice and Your Definition of Success	Tool 11: Gaps Analysis: Suggested Team Work Session Tool 12: Gaps Analysis Worksheet
Step 5: Identify Targets of Change	Tool 13: Identifying Targets of Change: Suggested Team Work Session Tool 14: Targets of Change Worksheet
Step 6: Develop and Implement a Work Plan	Tool 15: Assessing Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats: Suggested Team Work Session Tool 16: Developing an Implementation Plan: Suggested Team Work Session

***Understanding the issues***

You probably would not be reading this text if you didn't have some interest or concern about parole violations. This may be a relatively new interest for you, however, and scanning the literature on the topic may help you to view your own agency's concerns in a broader context and may help you engage others in a serious review of the issue. In the appendix to this document, under *Tools for Step 1: Form a Policy Team and a Working Team*, you will find tool 1, *Suggested Readings on Parole Violations and Strengthening Parole Practice*. These information sources are suggested as background for any further work you may pursue on this topic.

***Agencies that should be involved***

The essential agencies to be involved in this work include the parole board, the agency responsible for supervision of parolees once they are released, and the agency responsible for correctional institutions. Other agencies that should be considered for inclusion at some point are those providing services and support that offenders will need as they return to their communities. These might include state agencies providing substance abuse, housing, employment, or mental health services. Providers of victim services and advocacy are also important stakeholders to be included. In addition, private agencies involved in providing services or support for returning offenders would be likely candidates.

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Two kinds of individuals will need to be involved in this process: policy-level individuals who have the authority to convene such an effort, to allocate sufficient resources to it, and to make decisions to change practice when you have concluded where improvements are needed; and individuals who have the “nuts and bolts” knowledge about case flows and who can free up enough of their time to do the considerable work that such an effort takes. Such teams can be assembled in a variety of ways:

- **Beginning from the working team level.** One way that such work can begin is when line staff or midlevel staff recognize the importance of focusing on the issue and begin gathering information to “make the case” with their superiors that the agency or an alliance of agencies should begin to work on a key problem. In this scenario, it becomes important for the line or midlevel staff to do enough analysis and data collection to make a case with agency leadership that a policy-level team should be convened to guide the effort. This means that significant work will take place on “documenting current practice” before the effort can be officially sanctioned by the agency leadership.
- **Beginning from the policy team level.** Another way that such work can begin is when agency leadership understands the importance of the issue and buys into the idea that assembling such a team is important and worthwhile. In this instance, a policy team might begin work by rethinking vision, mission, and goals.

Ultimately, to be effective in mobilizing for change you should engage two overlapping teams drawn from the policy and operational levels of the agencies involved.

### **Roles within the team**

As part of assembling key stakeholders into a team, think about who will play

key roles. First, the team will need a chair or coordinator of team activities. This is the individual who is willing and able to be responsible for leading the team, keeping the team on course, and helping the team to be successful. The chair should be someone who, by virtue of position, experience, and/or personal stature and credibility, can keep the team energized and focused on its work. A facilitator should be designated to manage the work of the team, in support of the chair’s leadership. The facilitator will press the team to set a meeting schedule, establish ground rules for working together, check in with team members about agenda items for meetings, and notify everyone of the time and location of meetings. Just as important, a facilitator will manage the discussions in meetings, making sure that everyone is heard and that the meeting stays on time and on course. Such a team will also benefit from the designation of support staff who will take minutes, develop and circulate a meeting record, and perform other important functions.

### ***Working together: A policy team retreat***

One effective way to kick off and coalesce a policy team is to convene a day-long policy team retreat. A retreat is a meeting of key stakeholders, held in a location away from the normal work environment and all its distractions (e.g., telephone, e-mail, visitors) and devoted to creating a firm basis for your work together on strengthening parole through improved violation responses. At such a retreat, participants will share their perspectives on why parole violation and revocation practices are of significance, articulate their common interests, and define a vision of the future in which they all have a stake. In the appendix, under *Tools for Step 1: Form a Policy Team and a Working Team*, refer to tool 2, *A Checklist for Planning and Conducting a Policy Team Retreat*, and tool 3, *Sample Goals and Agenda for a Policy Team Retreat*.

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You will want to prepare some very preliminary information for use at the policy team retreat on (1) lessons from the national experience on parole violations and (2) what parole violations look like in the context of corrections in your state. In the appendix, under *Tools for Step 1: Form a Policy Team and a Working Team*—

- Use tool 4, *Presentation on Lessons From the NIC Project*, to provide an overview for retreat participants on some of the insights emerging from other states' work on this issue.
- Use tool 5, *Parole in Your State*, a set of two charts that, when completed with data from your state, will give at least a broad overview of the scope of violations and revocations and what you know about the outcomes of violations and the revocation process.

### ***Inside or outside your agency?***

Because of the fragmentation of the system and the wide range of agencies that have some interest in offender transition, teams that will be successful in creating change will be drawn from various agencies and will typically cross the traditional borders of agency and level of government. They will typically involve individuals from government agencies, private agencies, and the community. At first blush, some agencies are quite reluctant to include “outsiders” in such work because they feel that much work needs to be done internally. In fact, they are probably correct. As mentioned above, the task of creating good communication and coordination between the institutional staff and programs of a department of corrections and the supervision staff of the same department may be quite a challenge. The states involved in the NIC project found that it was helpful to involve different agencies at different stages of the process. For instance, in kicking off their efforts, a number of the teams invited senior representatives from departments of substance abuse

and mental health, employment services, child and family services, law enforcement, and other departments. As work teams emerged, often internal work teams handled data collection and analysis of policies. However, as agencies began to design and implement improvements internally, they were positioned to draw other agencies back into the discussions and to begin addressing more cross-system issues. No one correct sequence exists for this work. It is important to keep an open mind about bringing relevant stakeholders into the process as needs arise.

## **Step 2: Understand Current Practice and the Lessons of Research**

Step 2 will provide your team with the best information possible about how things are really working in your own state and about lessons emerging from the experience of other states and from the research.

### ***Understand current practice***

Detailed guidance about information that should be gathered to document current practice is provided below. The whole purpose of this information gathering is to enable you to ultimately *understand* what is really going on. Does this practice seem to get you where you want to be? Once the information on your own current practice has been collected, the team has familiarized itself with national research and practice, and information has been presented in a series of informal working papers, team members should meet to discuss the implications. The information on your own current practice paints a picture for the team of the nature and extent of parolees' performance on supervision, the incidence and nature of violations, and the system's response. It also provides a description against which you can compare practices in your own state with those in other states and with the

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principles emerging from the research. Once you have a good grasp of where you are, you will be able to move on to reconsider where you really want to be.

Do not be discouraged if you are unable to gather all of the information suggested. At least begin the process and try to include some information on each dimension, even if incomplete. If you have been able to gather your policy team together by this point, it is a good idea to meet and discuss among yourselves what questions you would want to have answered about violation practices. Are you interested in variation among different parts of the state? Are you more interested in documenting available resources? Remember, this is your undertaking; try to make it as practical and as relevant to your own system's needs as possible.

Regarding practice in your own state, you may have some preliminary information or ideas indicating that violations of parole are a topic you want to address. It would not be unusual if only rudimentary information was immediately available to you. However, regardless of your assumptions about what you know, it is essential to gather complete and current information about your practices. This work has three major parts:

- First, you will want to gather information about the violation process and how cases move through it. This will involve mapping the process and adding quantitative data to the map.
- Second, you will want to analyze the existing policy framework that gives form and direction to how your agencies handle violations. This will involve a review of all the formal and informal sources of guidance your staff members have to rely on regarding violations.
- Third, you will want to explore some of the informal and unspoken norms that staff are following in their responses to violations.

It is essential that your team members be involved in assembling all of this information on current practice so that the information will be credible. In fact, mapping the process is best done in the context of a team meeting. This is the task that requires the most systemwide knowledge, and it is likely that no one or two individuals will really have the information needed to construct such a map. In addition, the construction process is a learning activity in itself, providing opportunities for specialists in various aspects of the process to exchange information and, ultimately, to develop a common and credible understanding of current practice.

### ***Map the process***

It is not unusual for individuals to be quite knowledgeable about how things work at one or two stages of the process. A line parole officer may be very familiar with how to request approval for a petition to revoke parole but may not know how the same process occurs in a different part of the state or how the conditions of parole are set. Also, a hearing officer who conducts preliminary parole hearings may be very knowledgeable about the hearing itself and what information is typically presented but may not be so familiar with what happens at the line level as a parole officer is deciding whether an offender has actually violated some condition and whether it is appropriate to bring that violator forward on a petition to revoke. Similarly, parole board members may be quite knowledgeable about procedures at a final parole hearing and may have a clear sense of the factors that will persuade them to revoke parole, but a first-line supervisor in a regional office may not be familiar with that aspect of the process at all. This is why it is so critical to create a map of the process.

Ideally, you will want to begin the map at a point in time when the offender is admitted to a reception center in the department of corrections. This will



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allow you to capture information about assessments and programming within the institutions and how much lead time exists for preparation for release, what information is typically provided to the parole board for a release decision, and what information is available that might be forwarded to field supervision staff once the offender is released. Under *Tools for Step 2: Understand Current Practice and the Lessons of Research*, you will find tool 6, *Suggestions for Mapping the Violation and Revocation Process*. Tool 7, *The Violation Process: A Sample Map*, provides an example of a simplified map.

### **Add quantitative information**

Once you have created a map of the flow of parolees through the different stages of supervision, violation, and revocation, explore various ways in which to assemble statistics about the numbers of offenders passing through each stage of the process. Your existing management information system may be able to generate data that you may want to add to the map. If not, consider drawing a sample of cases from among those on supervision during a particular time period and tracking their movement through the process. The four states participating in the project selected a 1-year period and included cases from different parts of the state to track any variations occurring within the state. Once you have added numbers of cases to the points in the flow, you should also attach estimates of average time lapses between steps in the process. For example, to understand the impact of the process on local jail beds or on prison population, it is particularly helpful to understand how much time parolees spend in local jails or back in state facilities awaiting disposition of a petition to revoke. Tool 8, *Suggestions for Data Gathering and Analysis To Document Current Practice*, is included to provide some guidance about assembling a data set that

will shed light on the quantitative dimensions of the violation process in your state.

### **Assemble all written policies and procedures pertaining to violations**

Assemble all written policies and procedures pertaining to violations, including performance standards for your line officers and first-line supervisors. Here you are examining the messages your staff members are receiving regarding violations and supervision in general. It may be that incomplete or outdated guidance is provided to staff. Your official policy guidance must be clear and specific if your practices are to be consistent and supportive of agency vision, mission, and goals. One task of your team may be the redrafting or updating of existing policies and procedures. Refer to *Responding to Parole and Probation Violations: A Handbook To Guide Local Policy Development* for specific examples of policies and procedures adopted by states that have created graduated sanctions for parole violations. Refer to the examples in the state descriptions contained in this volume for other examples of efforts to incorporate evidence-based practice into responses to violations.

Refer to the appendix under *Tools for Step 2: Understand Current Practice and the Lessons of Research* for tool 9, *Understanding the Official Guidance on Parole Violations and Revocations: A Checklist of Items To Review*. This tool provides a checklist of the types of documents and sources that will help you clearly understand the official guidance and direction your agencies have disseminated to guide the work of their staff. Ultimately, as you are rethinking your policy and practice, you may need to recraft this guidance to make it more clear and more directly supportive of your current goals for the violation process.



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### **Review the performance standards for your line officers**

One important process an agency has in communicating with its staff is its employee review practices and any performance standards promulgated by the agency. In many parole supervision agencies “contact standards” are the major performance yardsticks against which line officers are measured. States participating in the latest NIC project found that making changes in such standards could provide another way to emphasize a shift in direction for line staff. In these states, emphasis was shifted from the number of contacts to the nature and purpose of the contacts to underscore the parole officer’s role as an agent of change with parolees.

### **Gather information about violation “practices” as distinct from official policy**

Just because policy is written does not mean that it is honored in practice. Conducting informal interviews or focus groups with staff from various regions of a state or levels within an organization will also provide some insight into how the work of supervision and responding to violations is actually practiced. This may provide information on how to clarify directions or correct misunderstandings on the part of staff. Kansas conducted a number of focus groups with line staff during its work with NIC, and this provided important insight into the different ways in which guidance from the agency regarding violations had been interpreted by staff.

### **Gather information about the range of responses available for violations**

It is one thing to discuss in theory that parole officers have some leeway to respond to technical violations through “intermediate” responses, and it is another to identify exactly what those responses are and that they are available.

### **Gather lessons emerging from national practice and research**

Fortunately, you are not examining your own practices in a vacuum. Other jurisdictions have addressed these issues before, and an expanding body of research knowledge speaks directly to violation policy and practice as well as to “what works” in effective correctional interventions. As a companion activity to documenting your own practice, your team and/or its subcommittees need to familiarize themselves with this body of work. You may want to refer back to the suggested reading found as tool 1 in the appendix for a framing of the national discussion on violations. You might also want to use tool 4, *Presentation on Lessons From the NIC Project*, to outline the lessons emerging from the NIC projects with a working team that may have expanded its membership.

The literature on what works includes a number of resources. The National Institute of Corrections Information Center summarizes some of the principles and provides links to other resources at <http://nicic.org/resources/topics/EffectiveInterventions.aspx>. In essence, the literature suggests that effective correctional interventions are successful in reducing the likelihood of recidivism for some offenders. It further finds that when those interventions are matched to higher risk offenders, focus on criminogenic needs, and incorporate principles of responsivity, reductions in recidivism can be quite significant.

### **Step 3: Revisit Your Definition of Success**

You may want to consider completing steps 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the context of a 1- or 2-day retreat, or you may do the work at shorter meetings over a period of time. However, steps 3, 4, 5, and 6 are clearly related, and you will rely heavily on the results of each step to progress to the next.

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In step 1 of this process, your policy team spent some time during its original retreat defining success for this initiative. Participants at that retreat were asked to answer the question, “If you were meeting on this topic 3 years from now and your efforts had been successful, what would be different?”

Since that time, if you have completed the work outlined in both steps 1 and 2—

- You have a much better picture of what your current practices are and the outcomes they will generate for you.
- You also have a better idea of what resources exist to respond to violations.
- You have taken the time to familiarize yourselves with what is going on nationally regarding violations and have looked at the literature about correctional interventions.

Given your expanded information base and greater insight, step 3 calls for the policy team and working team to revisit your definition of success and to explore whether any changes in the vision and mission of your agency or agencies are needed to guide your work into the future.

Corrections agencies are often so busy with the press of cases and workload that they have little opportunity to step back and reassess their overall direction as an agency. So much changes in the day-to-day environment, and our knowledge base is constantly being expanded by new research. For these reasons alone, it is critically important for any agency or group of agencies to take the time to look at the big picture.

In another section of this handbook, we discussed how thinking has radically shifted in community supervision agencies regarding the general assumptions of their work. Agencies are moving away from a strictly enforcement-focused, accountability-focused orientation to a

greater concern for ensuring the successful transition of offenders into the community and their successful completion of parole supervision without new offenses and victims and with greater community safety.

### ***Definition of success: A vision***

Under *Tools for Step 3: Revisit Your Definition of Success* in the appendix is an outline for a team session to help you reconsider the work done at the first policy team retreat. You will be trying to be more explicit and firm in describing how your state might look in the future if you are successful in setting conditions, releasing offenders, and managing them in the community, including how you respond to violations of parole. In fact, once you have completed this work, you will have stated your vision for the future.

### ***What is a mission?***

A mission statement describes the work and activities of the team needed to achieve your vision. The mission includes statements about what the primary work entails, who the key beneficiaries and customers are, and when the work will be performed. It will include a series of interim achievements that you have identified as essential to creating the future as depicted in your vision. It should be concrete, should articulate measurable targets of change, and should be connected clearly to creating your vision. The steps you take to achieve those targets of change become the goals and objectives of your team.

Once your team has articulated what it sees to be its vision and mission regarding violations and supervision, revisit any existing agency statements of vision and mission. Are they consistent? Do they conflict? Are they simply unrelated to one another? It may be that individual agency visions and missions require some adaptation based on current thinking.

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## Step 4: Assess Gaps Between Current Practice and Your Definition of Success

As a contrast with your vision of the future and how you see your mission, you now have a fairly thorough picture of your own current practice, lessons emerging nationwide from other states, and lessons from the research. Your team will want to pose the question, “How closely does our current practice bring us to achieving our vision?” The challenge is to assess carefully how current practice differs from what the team has identified as its vision and mission. The mismatch between current practice and a preferred future begins to define for your team the targets of change you will want to address as you plan to implement change. The mismatch between current practice and what has emerged from the research and the experiences of other jurisdictions begins to identify the tools you might use to move toward your vision and achieve your mission.

### **Key components of parole practice for review**

The experiences of other jurisdictions that have addressed these issues suggest that your team focus on potential strengths and weaknesses in the following:

- Policy.
- Protocols for assessing both risk and severity of violations.
- A clearly understood and documented range of responses to violation behavior.
- Clear policy guidance that links specific levels of risk and levels of violation severity with allowable responses.
- Setting of conditions targeted to risk and for which resources exist.

- A supervision and case management approach that incorporates evidence-based practice.

A gaps analysis is best conducted in the context of a team work session. Before such a session, participants should familiarize themselves with the information that documents current practice and knowledge. Ask each team member to highlight the aspects of current practice that seem to be assets in moving toward your vision and achieving your mission. Ask each to highlight the aspects that seem to be a hindrance to achieving your vision and mission.

Under *Tools for Step 4: Assess Gaps Between Current Practice and Your Definition of Success* in the appendix, you will find tool 11, *Gaps Analysis: Suggested Team Work Session*, to help you move through your gaps analysis and tool 12, *Gaps Analysis Worksheet*, to record some of your observations about the data analysis completed as part of step 3.

## Step 5: Identify Targets of Change

Once you have identified the gaps or mismatch between where you are and where you want to be, you can begin to identify specific targets of change. After those targets are clear, you can build specific objectives that will assist you in moving forward. Fortunately, states that have addressed these issues in the past have developed some promising innovations, such as those described in section III of this handbook, *Innovations in Four States*. A number of key targets of change involve the following:

- Clarification of policy and procedures and/or recrafting of policy and procedures to more directly support the current vision and mission of your team.
- Better direction and creation of incentives and support for staff performance

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that will support your vision and mission.

- Identification of and access to effective interventions with offenders.
- Supervision that incorporates evidence-based practice, includes risk-reduction strategies, and holds out successful completion of parole as a desired outcome.
- Collaborative partnerships with criminal justice, non-criminal justice, and community organizations.
- Community involvement as a source of capable guardianship and support for parolees.

Under *Tools for Step 5: Identify Targets of Change* in the appendix, tool 13 provides instructions on how to move your team through a process of identifying targets of change, and tool 14 provides a format for developing specific objectives that will move you toward the desired changes.

## **Step 6: Develop and Implement a Work Plan**

After you have developed targets of change and specific objectives to move you toward those targets, you will be ready to complete a detailed and specific

work plan. Before you do so, however, you should spend some time as a team identifying your assets and your obstacles.

Once you have completed this quick review of what you have going for you as a team, you will be ready to put together a detailed work plan. This will be your roadmap for achieving the success you have defined for yourselves. For each of your stated objectives, you will need to consider specifically what will have to happen for that objective to be realized. This will be your list of major work activities. Discuss what will be needed in order to complete these tasks: resources, approval, buy-in, cooperation of certain individuals or agencies, time, information, and so forth. Set timelines, milestones, and deadlines, and identify specific persons responsible for the completion of specific tasks.

In the appendix under *Tools for Step 6: Develop and Implement a Work Plan*, you will find tool 15, *Assessing Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats: Suggested Team Work Session*, and tool 16, *Developing an Implementation Plan: Suggested Team Work Session*. These tools provide a step-by-step framework for translating your earlier work into a specific implementation plan.

## *Conclusion—Focusing on the Issues Creates Opportunities*

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The states participating in the National Institute of Corrections technical assistance project on parole violations brought a number of concerns to the table. Perhaps the most important lesson to emerge from development of this handbook is that by focusing on the various issues and crises precipitated by parole violations, the four state teams created and discovered opportunities. By engaging in a thoughtful, collaborative, problem-solving approach, the teams discovered opportunities—

- To revisit their missions, visions, and goals in ways that helped focus and reenergize their efforts.
- To use the lessons emerging from research about effective interventions with offenders to move to evidence-based practice.
- To rethink and revitalize discretionary parole release and parole supervision as resources to enhance public safety and to encourage successful completion of parole.
- To recognize that true progress will depend heavily on the willingness and ability to engage in collaborative efforts within their own agencies and across traditional boundaries, extending outside the criminal justice system and into the community.



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## Notes

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13. Cho, R., Gary, D., Ball, L., and Ladov, M. *A Guide to Reentry Supportive Housing: A Three-Part Primer for Nonprofit Supportive Housing Developers, Social Service Providers, and Their Government Partners*. Oakland, CA: Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2002. Retrieved October 25, 2004 from <http://documents.csh.org/docs/crimjust-guide.doc>.
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15. Motivational interviewing is designed to help offenders recognize and do something about their problems rather than simply gather information



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or provide external guidance. It is based on a body of research summarized by Miller and Rollnick in their book, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*. A strength-based approach to supervision and case management focuses on what a person has rather than what a person does not have, what a person can do rather than what a person cannot do, and what a person has been successful at rather than past failures. Miller, W.R., and Rollnick, S.E. *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change* (2d ed.). New York: Guilford Press, 2002.

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22. Rhode Island was the one participating state whose information system did not allow it to establish a baseline.

***Appendix***  
***Steps and Tools To Mobilize for Change***

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# *Tools for Step 1: Form a Policy Team and a Working Team*

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## **Tool 1. Suggested Readings on Parole Violations and Strengthening Parole Practice**

*Beyond the Prison Gates: The State of Parole in America.* Available on the Web at [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310583\\_Beyond\\_prison\\_gates.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310583_Beyond_prison_gates.pdf)

*Policy-Driven Responses to Probation and Parole Violations.* Available on the Web at <http://nicic.org/Resources/Supplemental/PubDetails.aspx?recordID=115>

*Responding to Parole and Probation Violations: A Handbook To Guide Local Policy Development.* Available on the Web at <http://nicic.org/Resources/Supplemental/PubDetails.aspx?recordID=118>

Petersilia, Joan. *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

The article *Challenges of Offender Parole and Reentry in California*, describing how key points in this book are perceived in the state of California, is posted on Dr. Petersilia's Web site at [http://www.seweb.uci.edu/users/joan/Images/ca\\_parole\\_and\\_reentry.pdf](http://www.seweb.uci.edu/users/joan/Images/ca_parole_and_reentry.pdf). The full text of many of Dr. Petersilia's articles and a list of her books with ordering information are posted on her Web site at <http://www.seweb.uci.edu/users/joan/publications.html>.

## Tool 2. A Checklist for Planning and Conducting a Policy Team Retreat

1. Identify key members of the policy team.
2. Secure their cooperation in participating.
3. Identify a date and time when all can attend.
4. Identify a location with appropriate meeting space, privacy, and audiovisual capacity that is available for the date and time needed.
5. Send a registration form to all participants asking them to return contact information.
6. Develop meeting goals and agenda.
7. Identify a convener, a facilitator, and a recorder.
8. Prepare meeting materials: goals, agenda, background information, participant list. Have conveners review materials.
9. Arrange for refreshments or meal if possible.
10. Send reminders to all participants.
11. Hold retreat.
12. Prepare a meeting record and circulate it to all participants.

Time Before Retreat	Check When Complete
3 months	
3 months	
3 months	
2 months	
2 months	
6 weeks	
6 weeks	
4 weeks	
2 weeks	
4 weeks	
1 week after	

---

## Tool 3. Sample Goals and Agenda for a Policy Team Retreat

Hosted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

*(The meeting facilitator should provide each participant with a set of meeting materials, including a statement of the retreat's goals and agenda. The materials also should include a complete list of participants and a list of any visiting speakers or consultants (along with complete contact information, including name, title, agency, address, phone, fax, e-mail) to aid communication during and after the retreat. The retreat should be convened by the senior participating officials from the host agency(ies), who should outline their concerns about this issue and why it is of significance for the state. These conveners should then invite the designated facilitator to begin the discussions. The facilitator should review the retreat goals and agenda. The following goals are offered as suggestions and should be modified to reflect the particular goals that the group wants to achieve.)*

### **Meeting goals**

The purpose of this meeting/retreat is to provide participants with an opportunity to do the following:

- Come to a common understanding of the significance of parole violations as an important facet of the prisoner reentry process along with an understanding of current practice within their states.
- Define their common interests and goals in working toward effective, systemwide policy and practice in response to parole violations.
- Explore the tools and resources at their disposal to create a “system” response to parole violations.
- Forge a consensus as to how they will collaborate in achieving those goals, including—
  - Next steps to be taken.
  - Formation of a work group or subcommittees to continue the effort.

*(The facilitator may want to ask participants if they wish to add to or modify any of the goals.)*

### **Participants' interests in violations and revocation**

One of the most important assets of a group such as the one assembled today is that it brings a wide range of perspectives, expertise, and knowledge about current practices and policies. We would like to have participants contribute to this discussion by stating their own particular interests regarding parole violations and revocations.

*(The meeting facilitator should invite each participant to comment on his or her interests in meeting on this topic, outline what he or she hopes will emerge from the work, and record these comments on a flipchart throughout the discussion.)*





## ***Innovations in responding to violations: Experiences from other states***

You may want to consider inviting a colleague from another state who has worked on this issue to speak on his or her experiences, or you may wish to use the information provided in this handbook from the capsules on the participating states. Other resources include two documents developed under an earlier NIC technical assistance project: *Policy-Driven Responses to Probation and Parole Violations* (available on the NIC Web site at <http://nicic.org/pubs/1997/013793.pdf>) and *Responding to Parole and Probation Violations: A Handbook To Guide Local Policy Development* (available on the NIC Web site at <http://nicic.org/pubs/2001/016858.pdf>).

Key lessons about the process of working on this topic include the following:

- Make sure you have the right people at the table.
- Ensure that you have the necessary data to identify the problem or issue.
- Look at current policy and practice before you create new strategies.
- Keep your eye on the target over time; this effort will require continued vigilance.
- Monitor and evaluate.

Remember the following key points about the specific issue of violations:

- Develop your violation/supervision “vision” and help staff to “see” it!
- In light of your vision, consider your reentry and initial placement activities.
- Look at your whole violation process: Identify problems, bottlenecks, and issues.
- Look at your use of conditions: What do you apply and why? (And what do you expect?)
- Identify and seek the resources, training, and assistance you need to move toward your vision.
- Identify ways to better use staff supervision time.
- Respond to all violations.
- Tailor responses that are proportional and consistent, based on the risks posed by the offender and the severity of the violation.
- Develop/expand your continuum of responses.
- Empower staff to use their discretion in ways that will help you move toward your vision.

## ***Defining success for your state***

The next portion of the agenda will be devoted to a discussion among participants regarding what they would see as successful outcomes for a refined approach to violations. Each participant should be asked to answer the following question: “If you were meeting on this topic 3 years from now and your efforts had been successful, what would be different?” Your facilitator will record these observations on a flipchart or white board.

Once you have created a list of all participants’ desired outcomes, discuss how to integrate these into a more coherent statement. If possible, agree on a concise statement that incorporates the essence of the participants’ desired outcomes.

## ***What stands in the way of achieving success?***

Having spent time defining the successful outcomes that might be desired, the next section of the agenda is devoted to discussing obstacles that need to be understood and overcome to achieve success.

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*(The facilitator might ask each participant to identify one obstacle to a desired outcome. Once everyone has spoken, begin asking for obstacles again until everyone has had an opportunity to list all of the obstacles he or she thinks are relevant. If you have time, ask participants to identify clusters of problems, eliminate duplications, and create as concise a list as possible.)*

### **Having the right people at the table**

The group has now defined the outcomes they wish to see result from this effort, and they have identified obstacles that may stand in the way of that success. The next section of the agenda should be devoted to a discussion of other individuals and agencies that need to be part of this effort to (1) ensure success and (2) overcome obstacles. Typical agencies beyond the releasing authority, institutional corrections, and community supervision agencies include the following:

- State-level social services, mental health, substance abuse, education, housing, employment, and health agencies.
- Groups working on other federal initiatives regarding reentry, transition, or effective use of offender interventions.
- Private-sector agencies that deliver services that might be helpful to parolees/offenders.
- Victim advocacy organizations or system-based advocates.
- Workforce Investment Boards, state and local.
- Housing agencies.
- Community organizations.
- Faith-based communities.
- Juvenile justice, law enforcement, judges.

When possible, identify individuals within those organizations who might provide appropriate leadership, knowledge, and credibility to the work of the group.

## **Conclusions**

You now have identified your vision, what will look different if you are successful, and what your desired outcomes are. You have also identified obstacles to achieving that outcome, assets that you have at your disposal to address these obstacles, and an idea of others you need to involve to move forward.

Although a very lively discussion will probably ensue about how the outcomes of the violation process might be different—and what could be achieved if all components of the system were truly working together—you should not rush to action planning about specific problem areas.

Your next steps should be focused on documenting and understanding current practice. These include the following:

- Mapping the violation and revocation process.
- Planning and executing a quantitative analysis of a sample of parolees to understand the dimensions of the process.
- Gathering and analyzing all written materials that speak to the violation process: policy, procedures, staff evaluation practices, standards of supervision, assessment practices, etc.

You should conclude your retreat with the development of “next steps” to begin the work of documenting and understanding current practice.

---



## Tool 4. Presentation on Lessons From the NIC Project

### **Lessons From the National Institute of Corrections Project: Policy-Driven Responses to Parole Violations—A Window on Transition— Working With the States of Georgia, Kansas, New Jersey, and Rhode Island 2001–2003**

#### ***Project goal***

To assist four states in developing a policy-driven response to parole violations to ensure the highest rate of successful completion of parole supervision consistent with—


- Community safety.
- The wise use of resources.

#### ***Context***

- As a percentage of all admissions to state prison, parole violators more than doubled from 17 percent in 1980 to 35 percent in 1999.
- In 1999, parole violators accounted for more than 50 percent of state prison admissions in four states.
- Nearly a quarter of state prisoners in 1997 were parole violators.

#### ***Parole violations: Where we began . . .***

- A large proportion of admissions to prison are the result of technical violations of parole.
- Inconsistent practice; depends on the parole officer or on which board member is seen.
- Some offenders are less serious, some offenders less risky . . . maybe there is another way to approach this.
- Let's systematically craft policy to guide intermediate sanctions/punishments.
- Innovations.
- Rate severity of violations.
- Rate risk of offender.
- Rate risk of violation.
- Describe a "continuum of sanctions" for technical violations.
- Prescribe the expected match between severity/risk and sanctions.
- These innovations have been successful and are worthwhile. They have—
  - Reduced technical revocation.
  - Increased consistency.
  - Enabled agencies to identify and revoke high-risk offenders more quickly.
  - Reduced delay between violation and response.

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- 
- Other “fruits” of this work are as follows:
    - We have discovered a new arena in which to apply the lessons of evidence-based practice.
    - The work presents an opportunity for changing behavior and for supporting success, not just avoiding revocations.

### ***Parole violations: Where we are now . . .***

- Our goal is community safety.
- If an offender successfully completes parole—no new crimes, no new victims—EVERYONE WINS!!!

### ***What do we know about fostering success?***

- Treatment works.
- Official punishment without treatment does not work.
- Technical violations—indeed, all of supervision—provides an opportunity to use “effective correctional interventions.”
- The notion of “graduated” or intermediate sanctions/punishments does not capitalize on what we know about “what works.”
- Motivational interviewing can support behavior change, so . . .
  - Graduated sanctions for technical violations are fine to hold offenders accountable and to shape agency practice.
  - Once that is accomplished, if you want to change behavior you can look to use “effective correctional interventions . . . not just sanctions/punishment.”

### ***Lessons from the NIC effort . . .***

- Revisit vision, mission, and goals.
- Put effective assessment tools in place.
- Develop responses to violations that are aimed at changing behavior.
- Focus on incentives for positive behavior.

### ***The next challenges . . .***

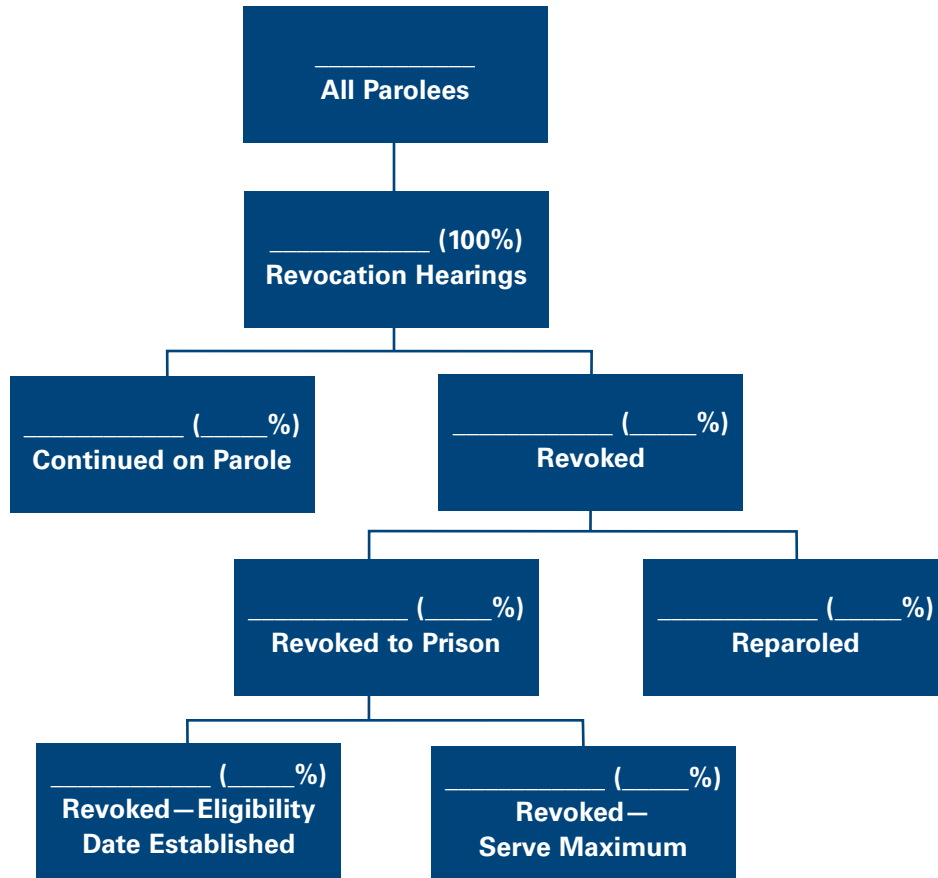
- Conducting case management/supervision based on evidence-based practice.
- Using the assessment capacity we have created to support changes in supervision/management.
- Linking with nontraditional resources in the community.
- Bringing staff along from “contact-standard” and compliance driven to managing for success.
- Providing the necessary training, tools, and support to staff.

## Tool 5. Parole in Your State

*Parole in your state: Parole violations and correctional populations in \_\_\_\_\_*

Total Prison Population	
Admissions Per Year	
New Sentences	
Parole Violations	
Probation Violations	
Other	
Total Parole Population	

### Parole in Your State—Violations Revocations FY \_\_\_\_\_



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## *Tools for Step 2: Understand Current Practice and the Lessons of Research*

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### **Tool 6. Suggestions for Mapping the Violation and Revocation Process**

- **Begin plans for a mapping meeting.** Make plans to gather a group of individuals who together represent knowledge of every aspect of the entire process, from offender preparation for release from prison through discharge from parole.
- **Why not just assign this task to a really smart, experienced person? Wouldn't that be more efficient?** The process of identifying and responding to violations is part of the larger and quite complex flow of cases from arrest through adjudication, incarceration, release, and supervision and discharge. No one really works with every aspect of the process in enough depth to understand the entire picture. You will need to gather information from numerous individuals and agencies who specialize in each separate phase.
- **Why a meeting?** This is a journey of discovery, and experience suggests that every time a group of individuals engages in this process, each participant learns much that he or she did not know before, and each contributes to the whole picture. The group activity creates an appreciation for the complexity of the process and the fact that we all have much to learn. It also allows information about the various aspects of the process to be confirmed on the spot, since "experts" for each phase are present. It also gives authority and credibility to the product of the meeting because it has involved verification from a wide range of expert sources.
- **Who should participate?** At least one individual who is knowledgeable about each aspect of the process should participate. This should include at least one person who is an expert in each of the following:
  - Institutional programming, assessment, case management, and preparation for release.
  - The parole release process and setting of conditions.
  - Transfer of information from institutions to the field.
  - Actual day-of-release activities.
  - Assessment and assignment to supervision in the field.
  - Supervision and case management.
  - Violation policies and practices.
  - Custody awaiting disposition.
  - Violation hearings, both preliminary and final.
  - Available dispositions at the final hearing.
  - Resources in the community.





- **What will you need?** You will need a facilitator who can guide the group through the process, an ample supply of newsprint and markers, and meeting space that allows you to affix a large number of newsprint sheets to the wall.
- **How long will it take?** Allow at least 4 hours to complete the initial mapping.
- **What should we do in this meeting?**
  - Start by deciding where you will begin your map. Most jurisdictions find it is helpful to begin while an offender is in prison and to chart the steps that lead to release.
  - Draw a rectangle or other shape (see the figures at the end of this worksheet) for the step that indicates the beginning of the process that you have chosen.
  - Then, through discussions among the group members, identify each subsequent step, whether it is to be an information-gathering step, an action by the offender, an action by staff, or some sort of decision. To connect the steps, use arrows indicating the sequence of the steps and the possible outcomes at each stage until you reach the point of discharge from supervision.
  - For each step where there is a decision, identify the decisionmaker and, if possible, the type of information available at that stage. Indicate the time elapsed between each step.
  - Add any preliminary information you have on the numbers of cases flowing through the process. For instance, you should be able to document at least how many violation hearings (preliminary and final) you hold in the course of a year.
- **What happens if we can't fill in all the steps?** This suggests that you have some gaps in your working team and that you probably need to seek help from other stakeholders. Do the most thorough job that you are able to do, given the team members attending the meeting. Your next step, then, would be to identify others who can join the group and fill in any gaps that may remain in the map.
- **How do we communicate this information to others?** After your newsprint and marker version of the map is complete, transcribe it into typed form so that it can be distributed and shared with others involved in the effort. You will want to add to it over time, as you gather more information.

You may want to use rudimentary rectangles for each step of the process, just to set the basic framework in place. However, using the following figures will be helpful if you want to begin to distinguish steps where decisions take place from steps that are simply processing, input of information, and so forth.

Process Step



Input



Final Step in the Branch  
(Terminus)



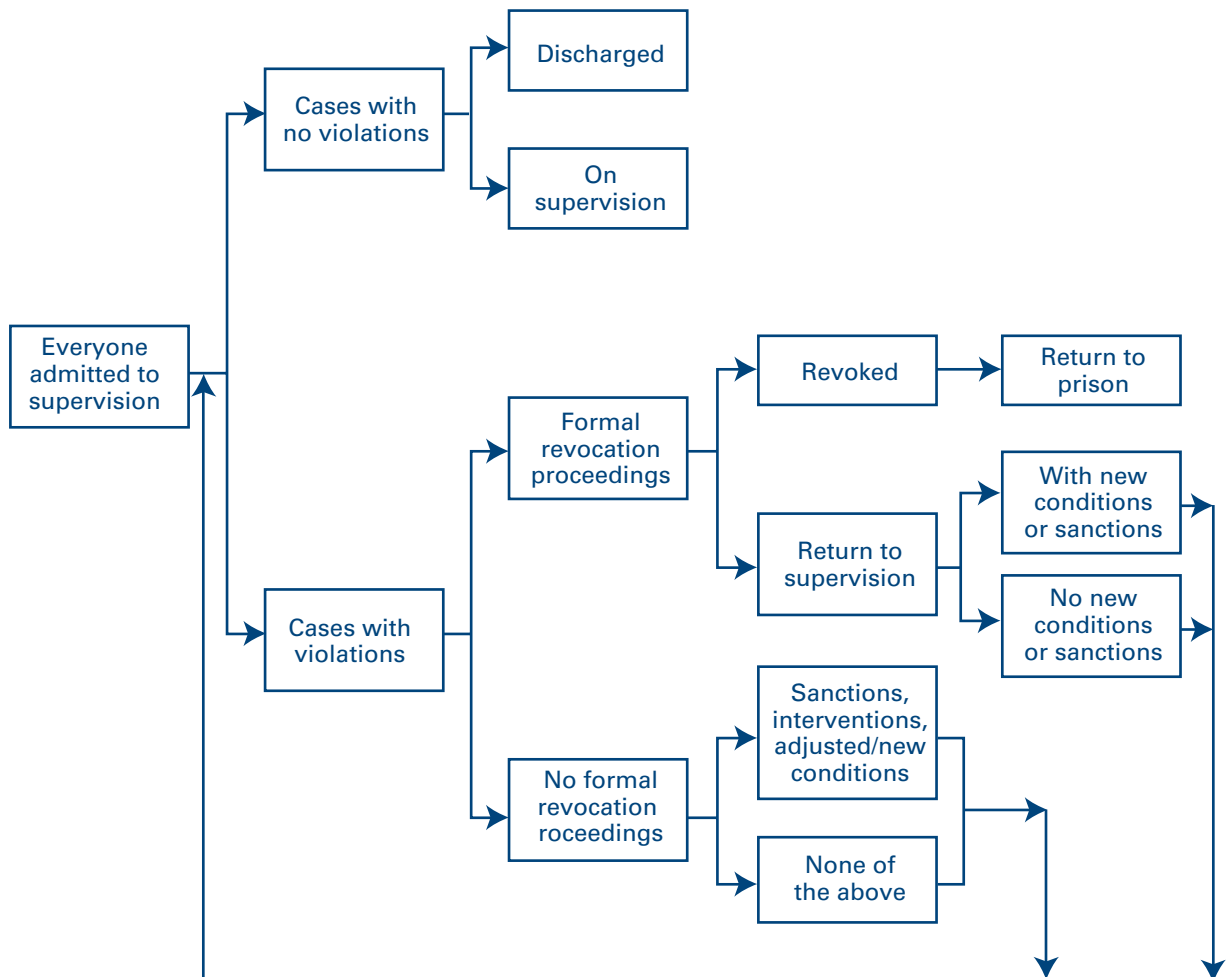
Decision Point



## Tool 7. The Violation Process: A Sample Map

- Pick a time period for which you can answer the question, “During this period of time, what number of offenders were admitted to parole supervision?”
- Place the answer to that question in box 1.
- For those cases, insert the numbers that correspond with the stipulation in each of the boxes, proceeding from left to right.
- Using the number in box 1 as 100 percent, calculate the percentage that is represented in each box.

### Tool 7: Sample Map of the Outcomes of Parole Violations



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## Tool 8. Suggestions for Data Gathering and Analysis To Document Current Practice

The goal of a quantitative analysis of parole violations and revocations is to build an understanding of how significant violation behavior is, how it affects the ability of an offender to successfully complete parole, and how the system does or might respond to violations.

### ***General contextual and descriptive information***

As context for your discussion, you will need to assemble information on the following important big-picture parameters as a backdrop for your policy discussions. Much of the overall contextual information outlined here is probably available in published reports that your agencies already produce.

Information on offenders in correctional institutions (provide the most recent information, indicating the year represented):

- How many prison admissions occurred (in the most recent available year) in your state?
- Of these admissions, how many (and what percentage) were a result of—
  - New convictions?
  - Parole revocations?
  - Probation revocations?
- What is the average daily population of your prison system?
- What is the average length of stay, by type of admission and charge (if available)?
- What is your overall statewide incarceration rate?
- What is the average daily cost for prison inmates?

Information on agency staff involved in community supervision:

- How many field parole officers and field probation officers are there (statewide and by district or region)?

Information on admissions, average daily population, and terminations from parole and parole supervision:

- What was the number of admissions to parole in the most recent year?
- What was the average daily population under parole supervision that year?
- What was the average length of time under parole supervision, by type of release (if known)?
- What was the number of exits from parole in the same year?
- Of these discharges, how many (and what percentage) were for—
  - Successful discharge?
  - Revocation?
  - Discharge to a new sentence?
- What is the average daily population of your probation system?
- What is the average length of time under probation supervision, by type of conviction (if known)?

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Information on supervision practices (statewide and for individual districts or regions):

- What is the average parole caseload size (statewide and by district or region)?
- Do you have specialized caseloads?
  - If so, how are they structured (e.g., by problem area, such as a mental health caseload, or by risk level, such as an administrative caseload)?
  - What is the capacity and average caseload in each?
- What is the average length of time under supervision?
- What determines the length of time under supervision (e.g., length of sentence, good time earned, performance on supervision)?

Information on initial conditions of supervision (statewide and for individual districts or regions):

- Of those placed under parole supervision during a recent year, what is the distribution of the following initial conditions of supervision:
  - Average number of conditions mandated?
  - Percentage with conditions for drug treatment?
  - Percentage with conditions for drug testing only?
  - Percentage with program referral?
  - Percentage with different reporting levels (for example, of all those placed under supervision, what percentage were initially put under “routine” reporting; what percentage were initially placed under increased reporting; what percentage were initially placed under administrative reporting)?

Information on violations (the following information may need to be extrapolated from a sample of cases drawn specifically as part of this effort):

- Purpose of the information.
- Developing the information. (Because the automated data systems in most states are not geared to provide this type of information, the information will probably have to be extrapolated from case-specific data collection. When the information concerns yearly totals as noted below, we suggest that you develop proportions based on the case-specific information and then apply these to overall and district totals. An example is provided below.)
- Overall violation information (statewide and for individual districts or regions).
- What is the total number of violations reported in a recent year? (This will only be available in your jurisdiction if some notation is made in the record when violations occur, even if they are not followed by a formal petition to revoke parole.)
- What percentage of those under supervision have one or more violations (from case-specific information)?
- What is the total number of parolees for whom violations were reported in a recent year?
- For those with violations, what is the average number of violations reported per parolee (from case-specific information)?
- For reported violations (from case-specific information)—
  - What percentage was for technical violations?
  - What percentage was for new criminal activity?

- 
- Within each category (technical and criminal), please indicate the types of violations to the extent known:
    - For instance, for technical violations, what percentage were for nonreporting, what percentage were for failure to participate in treatment, what percentage were for “dirty” urine samples?
    - For criminal activity, what percentage were for misdemeanors?
    - What percentage were for felonies?
    - What percentage were for crimes against persons, or property crimes, or violent crimes? Please tell us how you are defining crimes (from case-specific information).
    - What specific conditions were violated (from case-specific information)?
    - How many parolees had formal violation proceedings against them in the year (from case-specific information)?
      - Among these, how many were revoked to prison?
      - Among these, how many were revoked and reparaoled?
      - How many were continued on supervision?
    - Of the total number of technical violations, what percentage received nonrevocation responses (from case-specific information)?
    - Of the total number of sanctions (from case-specific information)—
      - What percentage were “punitive” violations (e.g., increased reporting; verbal reprimand)?
      - What percentage were “treatment oriented” (e.g., counseling; increased programs)?

### ***District-specific distribution of responses***

Because one issue that often arises in a discussion of parole violations is whether practices are consistent from one part of the state to another, or even from one parole officer to another, it is suggested that you gather case-specific information from a subset of offices or districts. You might want to consider selecting districts that differ in terms of degree of urbanization, size, and other variables. For each district or office, you would want descriptive statistics from the case information, according to the flowchart. In each box on the flowchart, we want an absolute number and a percentage (which is the percentage based on the source box just to the left). For the terminal boxes, at the far right, we would also like a percentage of the overall number of cases in the sample.

### ***Overall***

We want to create subgroups of offenders in the case-specific information for comparison purposes.

The first comparison would be—

- Those for whom no violation is reported regardless of whether they are discharged or their case is still open at the end of the followup period versus
- Those for whom one or more violations are reported.

The second comparison would be, among those for whom one or more violations are reported—

- Those who had a revocation proceeding initiated versus
- Those who had no formal revocation proceeding initiated.

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A third comparison would be—

- Those who had no violation reported versus
- Those who were revoked versus
- Those who had violations reported but had no formal proceedings filed.

Dimensions of comparison would be—


- Average age.
- Gender distribution.
- Race.
- Prior criminal record (distribution of felonies, misdemeanors, type).
- Juvenile incarcerations.
- Prior prison terms.
- Type of release (mandatory versus discretionary).
- Average time on supervision.
- Supervision level at release.
- Number of interventions that are “treatment” oriented.
- Specialized caseload.
- Living arrangements at time of release.
- Employment at time of release.
- Living situation at time of study end (or revocation, or at discharge).
- Employment at time of study end (or revocation, or at discharge).
- Program involvement at study end (or revocation, or at discharge).
- Supervision level at release at study end.
- Specialized caseload at study end.



## Tool 9. Understanding the Official Guidance on Parole Violations and Revocation: A Checklist of Items To Review

	Do We Have This?		Check When Acquired	Check When Reviewed
	Y	N		
1. Policy regarding violations.	Y	N		
2. Procedures regarding violations.	Y	N		
3. Standards of supervision.	Y	N		
4. Instructions about case management.	Y	N		
5. Instructions for first-line supervisors about how to guide line staff regarding violations.	Y	N		
6. Performance review standards: formal guidance on how staff will be evaluated and how this evaluation speaks (or does not speak) to the handling of violations.	Y	N		
7. Mission of the agency.	Y	N		
8. Formal statements about the purpose of supervision and responses to violations.	Y	N		
9. Agency philosophy.	Y	N		
10. Formal statement about what interventions or responses are appropriate/available in the case of technical violations of parole.	Y	N		
11. Standard conditions of supervision.	Y	N		
12. Information on available resources for offenders in the community.	Y	N		

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## *Tools for Step 3: Revisit Your Definition of Success*

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### **Tool 10. Revisiting Your Definition of Success for Responding to Parole Violations in Your State: Suggested Team Work Session**

**Preparations.** Take the earlier work of the policy team on defining the outcomes they would expect of this effort if it is successful. Create a poster-sized printed version of their statements. Post the printed version in your meeting room. Designate a facilitator.

**Work session goal.** Revisit your earlier work on defining success so that it can be confirmed or adjusted as necessary and to provide a common frame of reference for team members completing the remaining steps of the process: a vision for the future.

At a policy team retreat held as one of the first team activities, participants developed statements describing how they would define the success of this effort, which is designed to improve the response to parole violations by increasing the number of policy-driven practices, and how they would generate the outcomes desired by the team. These statements may have been revised and refined over time.

Use the poster-sized statement as a focal point for the following exercise led by your facilitator:

1. Review this language and make sure that all participants are clear about it.
2. Each team member should take a few minutes to jot down any changes he or she thinks should be made, write comments about what might be missing, or describe how his or her definition of success may have evolved since the last discussion. Your facilitator should ask each team member individually to summarize his or her thoughts.
3. Based on this discussion, try to reach an agreement about any changes or additions. Continue your discussions until you have a reasonable statement of your definition of success before proceeding to the next questions. If necessary, continue to work with your facilitator to resolve disagreements and reach consensus.
4. How will you know when you have achieved success? How will you measure success? What information will you need, where will it come from, and how will you routinize the collection of this information? Please refer to your experiences in collecting data in preparation for this workshop.
5. If your team has already completed the work in items 3 and 4 above, please consider the following:
  - What language in your definition of success is most powerful or inspiring? Why is it important to you?
  - How do you communicate this definition of success within your own agency or to your colleague agencies in the criminal justice system? How could you do so in the future?



Revisiting your definition of success should provide a common frame of reference to serve as a basis for your continued work on this effort. In fact, it becomes your statement of vision for the future.

The next item your team should discuss during this session is your mission. A mission is a series of interim achievements that you have identified as essential to creating the future depicted in your vision. It should be concrete, should articulate measurable targets of change, and should be connected clearly to creating your vision. The steps you take to achieve those targets of change become the goals and objectives of your team.

Once your team has articulated what it sees to be its vision and mission regarding violations and supervision, revisit any existing agency statements of vision and mission. Are they consistent? Do they conflict? Are they simply unrelated to one another? It may be that individual agency vision and mission require some adaptation based on current thinking. They may become one of your targets of change.

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# *Tools for Step 4: Assess Gaps Between Current Practice and Your Definition of Success*

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## **Tool 11. Gaps Analysis: Suggested Team Work Session**

***What does our work so far—particularly the data collection—tell us about current practice?***

### ***Preparations***

This work session can be completed only when you have conducted a thorough analysis of current practice, including performing a mapping exercise, gathering quantitative data on parolees flowing through the violation process, gathering and reviewing all pertinent written materials pertaining to violations and revocations, and interviewing staff to obtain a sense of informal norms and practices undocumented in other ways.

### ***Goal***

To develop clear insight into current violation practice that is shared by all team members. This insight will form the foundation of any plans to change policy or practice to conform more closely with the goals and mission outlined previously by the policy team.

### ***First activity (30 minutes)***

Review answers to the questions posed by the project based on the aggregate and case-specific data. Use the attached worksheet to summarize answers to those questions:

- Review issues/questions included with each item and/or articulate the group's questions and issues related to each item.
- How do parole officers typically respond to technical violations of parole? Across the state? Does this differ from one district/region to another?
- How would you characterize responses to technical violations (consistent/inconsistent, punitive/treatment-oriented, etc.)?
- What other questions are relevant for the group? Discuss.

### ***Second activity (30 minutes)***

Review the abbreviated flowcharts and, as a team, discuss and clarify exactly what they describe:

- Compare the region/district- and state-level charts.



- Discuss the statewide flowchart. Any surprises, problems, or opportunities for change?
- Discuss differences from one part of the state to the next.
- Walk through comparisons of the profile of parolees (see “Profiles of groups of parolees” in Tool 12. Gaps Analysis Worksheet), and for each comparison identify the areas of differences. Are they differences that seem appropriate or significant, given the groups being compared (e.g., do they suggest differences in risk, conditions, degree of adjustment, participation in programming)?
  - In this order, compare—
    - Parolees who have violations but for whom no formal revocation proceedings have begun (C) in contrast with
    - Parolees with violations for whom formal revocation proceedings have begun (D).
  - Compare—
    - Parolees with no violations (A) in contrast with
    - Parolees who have violations, but no formal proceedings have begun (C), in contrast with
    - Parolees who are revoked (E).
  - Compare—
    - Parolees who have no violations (A) in contrast with
    - Parolees who have violations (B).

### ***Third activity (20 minutes)***

Free discussion. So far, the discussion has been structured around specific questions. Now is the time to comment on what this information really suggests to you. Is your current practice what you expect? If not, why/how not? If so, are you satisfied with it, or does it need to change? What information is missing that you might want to make sure you have in the future?

### ***Fourth activity (25 minutes)***

How does this practice support or not support achieving the mission, goals, and interests stated by your team? Refer back to the statement recorded on the poster at your last meeting. Remember that the data are not the only sources of information you have. You also have your map or flow-chart of the process, your review of policy documents, interviews with staff and others, and the experience of the team sitting around the table.

### ***Fifth activity (15 minutes)***

Identify someone from your team to be a “reporter” for this session. As a group, prepare a brief (approximately 10 minutes) summary of the key findings emerging from this discussion:

- Summarize your current practice.
- What is most surprising?
- Does current practice support your mission and goals?

Use this meeting record to document your work and to communicate it to any members who are absent and to others working on this effort.

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## Tool 12. Gaps Analysis Worksheet

*What does your work so far—particularly the data collection—tell you about current practice?*

Question	Response/Notes
What percentage (and number) of parolees in the sample had one or more violations? What are the implications of this “scope” of violations? If this rate were true for your entire parole population, what is the absolute number of violators/violations that you would be dealing with?	
For those with violations, what was the average number of violations reported per parolee?	
For reported violations, what percentage were for technical violations? What percentage were for new criminal activity?	
Within each category, what types of violations were reported? For instance, for technical violations, what conditions were violated? For criminal violations, which involved felonies versus misdemeanors, which were for crimes against persons?	
Of the total number of technical violations, what percentage received nonrevocation responses?	
Of the total number of sanctions, what percentage was “punitive”? What percentage was “treatment oriented”?	





### Profiles of groups of parolees

Please use the following worksheet to capture differences among the group and to record questions/observations/comments during your team work session.

Characteristic	Parolees With No Violations (A)	Parolees With Violations (B)	Parolees With Violations/No Formal Revocation Proceedings (C)	Parolees With Violations/ Formal Revocation Proceedings Begun (D)	Revoked Parolees (E)
<b>Background</b>					
Average Age					
Gender					
Race					
Prior Criminal Record					
Prior Prison Terms					
Juvenile Incarceration					
<b>Initial Release Information</b>					
Type of Release					
Supervision Level at Entry					
<b>Conditions</b>					
Average Number					
Percentage With Conditions for Drug Treatment					
Percentage With Conditions for Drug Testing Only					
Percentage With Conditions for Program Referral					
Average Number of Interventions That Are "Sanction" Oriented					
Average Number of Interventions That Are "Treatment" Oriented					
Living Arrangements					
Employment					

(continued on next page)

Characteristic	Parolees With No Violations (A)	Parolees With Violations (B)	Parolees With Violations/ No Formal Revocation Proceedings (C)	Parolees With Violations/ Formal Revocation Proceedings Begun (D)	Revoked Parolees (E)
<b>Status at Termination or March 31, 2002</b>					
Status					
Living Arrangements					
Employment					
Program Involvement					
Reporting Level					
Average Time on Supervision					
<b>Violation History</b>					
Number of Technical Violations— Average and Distribution					

1. What are the differences among these groups that seem most marked? Are they the kinds of differences you would expect? If not, why not?
2. Would you say that the “sorting” your current practice is doing is yielding the results you would expect or desire?
3. What is most surprising about these comparisons?

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## *Tools for Step 5: Identify Targets of Change*

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### **Tool 13. Identifying Targets of Change: Suggested Team Work Session**

#### ***Preparation***

You should have completed your documentation of current practice, completed a session revisiting your definition of success, and completed an analysis of gaps. In addition, you should familiarize yourselves with the information on the NIC Web site pertaining to targets of change identified by other jurisdictions. Identify someone to act as facilitator and someone to act as recorder for the session.

#### ***Goal***

To consider the already identified gaps existing between current practice (as documented by the data collection, analysis, and discussions of the previous session) and optimal practice that support achieving the team's stated mission and goals, to identify specific targets of change that would begin to fill the gaps between current practice and desired outcomes, and to develop specific objectives that must be achieved to bring about the desired change.

#### ***First activity***

During this portion of the session, the team will begin identifying specific problems that have emerged in current practice. Based on the analysis already completed, identify and define some of the problem issues that emerged:


- Each member of the team should take a few moments to jot down the three or four “problems” they see from current practice.
- As a group, create a single list of those problems.
- When duplication occurs or similar problems are stated differently, restate the problems in a way that all members of the group can agree on.
- Prioritize these problem/issue areas. If consensus does not emerge quickly on a list with a maximum of five items, use the “dots” method; your facilitator will help. Reduce the list to a maximum of five items by setting priorities.

#### ***Second activity***

Take the list of five priority problems/issues you have generated and record them on the attached worksheet (Tool 14. Targets of Change Worksheet).

Across the top of the chart, a number of “domains” are listed within which you might think of targets of change. If appropriate, you may want to add other domains as headings for the other columns on the worksheet.

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Discuss how you might begin to identify items that could be changed in one or all of these domains to address the problems you have identified. Please use the attached worksheet to record specific targets of change that would help address each problem identified. Keep in mind the presentations on “Innovative Strategies for Success.”

### ***Third activity***

For each priority problem included on your list—

- Restate as clearly and concisely as possible the specific targets of change you have identified.
- What would you have to do to bring about the desired change?

For each target of change—

- Develop a clear statement of your specific objective.
- For instance, if one of the problems/issues is that practice seems to be quite varied in different parts of the state, you may identify “redrafting and publishing new policy language to give specific direction to staff about the agency’s policy on this” as a target of change. A specific objective in this instance might state the following:

The team will develop clear language for Section 4b of the agency policy manual that delineates exactly what is expected of staff in the event of a technical violation. Definitions of terms will be included, a ranking of violation behavior will be included, directions as to how to assess risk will be included, and a range of specific responses for each combination of severity and risk will be presented.

- If a target of change is “training for staff,” then specific objectives might be—

(a) redesign a training module for new parole officer training that familiarizes new staff with what is expected of them regarding responding to violations, and (b) develop and implement a series of training events for current line staff and supervisors regarding responding to violations over the next 6 months.

The recorder should prepare a complete summary of the key findings emerging from this discussion. This meeting record will be used to keep others informed of the team’s work and to serve as a starting place for your next work session.

## Tool 14. Targets of Change Worksheet

Use the following chart to record your thoughts and suggestions during your team's discussion.

Domains in Which You Might Explore Solutions				
Problem/Issue	Policy	Training	Organizational Culture	Goals Clarification
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Domains in Which You Might Explore Solutions				
Problem/Issue	Operations	Manner in Which Staff Is Evaluated/ Performance Standards for Staff	Tools: Structured Ways of Assessing Severity, Risk, Articulating Available Responses	Collaboration/ Fragmentation Issues
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				



<b>Domains in Which You Might Explore Solutions</b>				
<b>Problem/Issue</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Other</b>
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				



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## *Tools for Step 6: Develop and Implement a Work Plan*

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### **Tool 15. Assessing Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats: Suggested Team Work Session**

#### ***Goal***

As you become ready to develop specific plans for making your desired changes, consider the challenges you face and the resources at your disposal for achieving your goals and objectives. Reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that you must address in moving toward the changes you have identified. To identify the elements in the SWOT analysis, your facilitator should allow each team member to offer a comment in turn, repeating the process as often as needed until all participants have had an opportunity for all of their comments to be heard. The results of your discussion should be placed in the following matrix:

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>



In thinking about what will be needed to mobilize your team and others to achieve the changes you have articulated—

- Identify the strengths that your team members bring to a collaborative process.
- Identify the weaknesses in your team.

Similarly, both opportunities and threats are present in the environment in which you are operating.

- Identify the external opportunities that can assist you in your planning efforts.
- Identify the external threats that may have a negative impact on your ability to engage in a successful planning process.

Keep your flipchart notes on hand for context as you move on to the last part of the team work session.

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## **Tool 16. Developing an Implementation Plan: Suggested Team Work Session**

### ***Goal***

To generate a clear plan with tasks, milestones, sequence, and assignment of responsibility to guide the work of the team implementing the targets of change.

### ***First activity***

Go back to your list of specific objectives. For each objective, consider the specific things that will have to happen for that objective to be realized. This will be your list of major work activities.

### ***Second activity***

Discuss what will be needed to complete these tasks: resources, approval, buy-in, cooperation of certain individuals or agencies, time, information, etc.

### ***Third activity***

Set timelines and identify the specific persons responsible for the completion of specific tasks.

Create a record of the meeting, including the detailed work plan you have generated. This will become your guide for work over the time period ahead as you implement specific changes in your policy and practice.

# User Feedback Form

Please complete and return this form to assist the National Institute of Corrections in assessing the value and utility of its publications. Detach from the document and mail to:

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1. What is your general reaction to this document?

\_\_\_\_\_ Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_ Useless

2. To what extent do you see the document as being useful in terms of:

	Useful	Of some use	Not useful
Providing new or important information			
Developing or implementing new programs			
Modifying existing programs			
Administering ongoing programs			
Providing appropriate liaisons			

3. Do you believe that more should be done in this subject area? If so, please specify the types of assistance needed. \_\_\_\_\_

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|---|---------------------------------|
| _____ Citizen group                       | _____ Legislative body          |
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| _____ Court                               | _____ Probation                 |
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| _____ Jail                                | _____ Other government agency   |
| _____ Juvenile justice                    | _____ Other (please specify)    |

8. Optional:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_