

Measuring What Matters

# Defining Success in Probation

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Effective  
Public Policy

December 3, 2025

# The Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) is working to create a world where justice enhances well-being for all.

For 45 years, CEPP has supported practitioners, policymakers, and communities in reimagining a justice system that works for all—providing training, resources, and strategic planning grounded in local and national expertise.

Visit our website at [cepp.com](https://cepp.com) to learn more.



# Our Team

We have decades of experience working at all levels of the criminal legal system, a deep understanding of that system, and subject area expertise to help organizations move their important work forward.



# Our Areas of Expertise



# Our Approach



Research-  
Informed



Collaborative



Focused on  
Human Dignity



Equity-Centered

# Our Impact



Partnered with stakeholders  
in all 50 states

**1,000+**

Counties received training  
or assistance



Trained thousands of judges,  
lawyers, community members,  
corrections staff, and other  
professionals

**83,500+**

Practitioners trained



Developed a library of hundreds  
of tools, reports, and guides that  
span many topics

# Faculty



**Troy Hatfield**, Senior Manager  
Center for Effective Public Policy



**Melissa Stephenson**, Director  
Grant County Court Services



# Session Goals

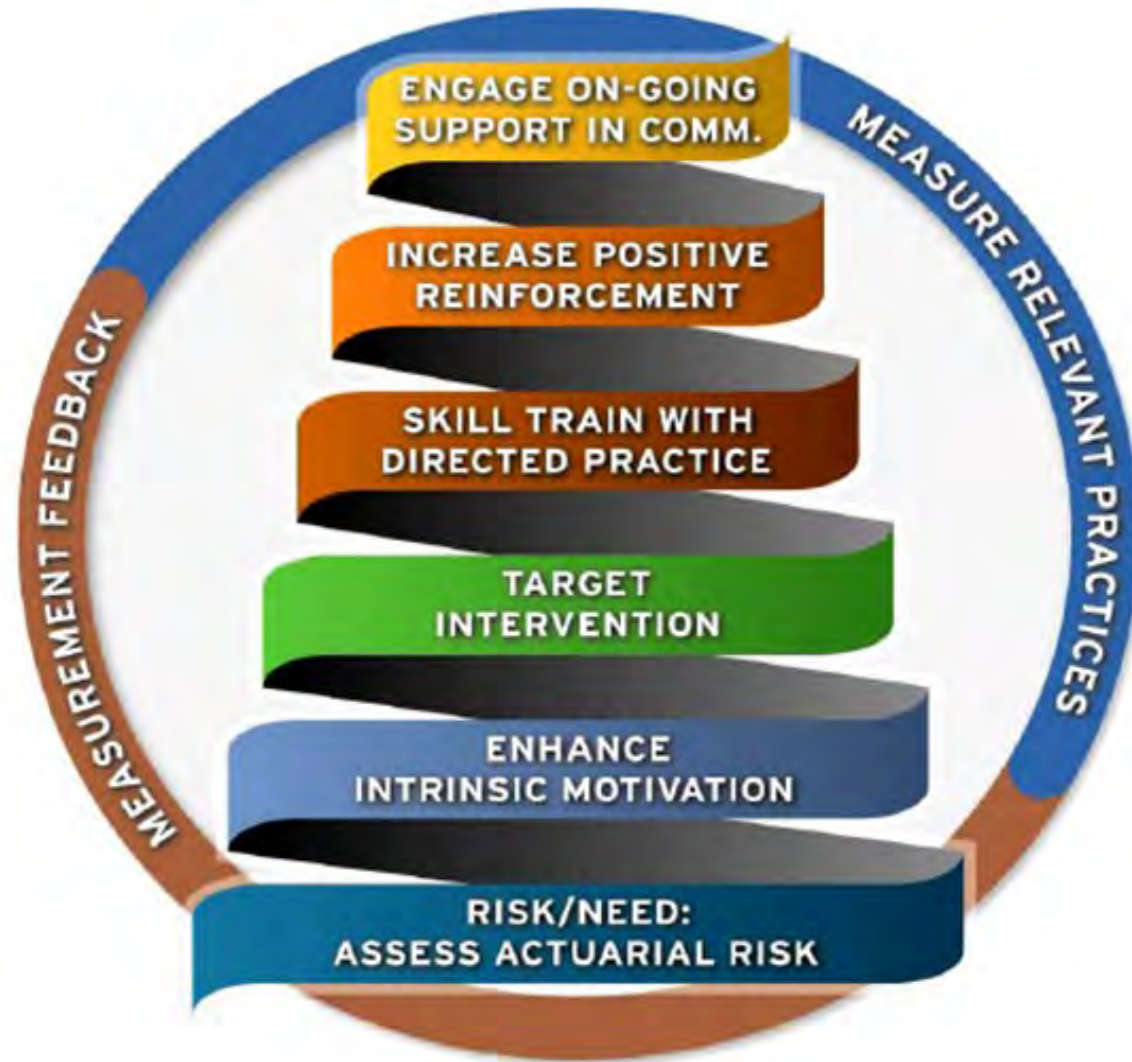
- Understand the value and purpose of performance measures
- Learn how to select, calculate, and interpret key probation measures
- Explore how data can drive improvement and communication

# Why Performance Measures Matter

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# Eight Principles of Effective Intervention



American Probation and Parole Association

# National Standards for Community Supervision

June 2024



# APPA Performance Measurement Standards

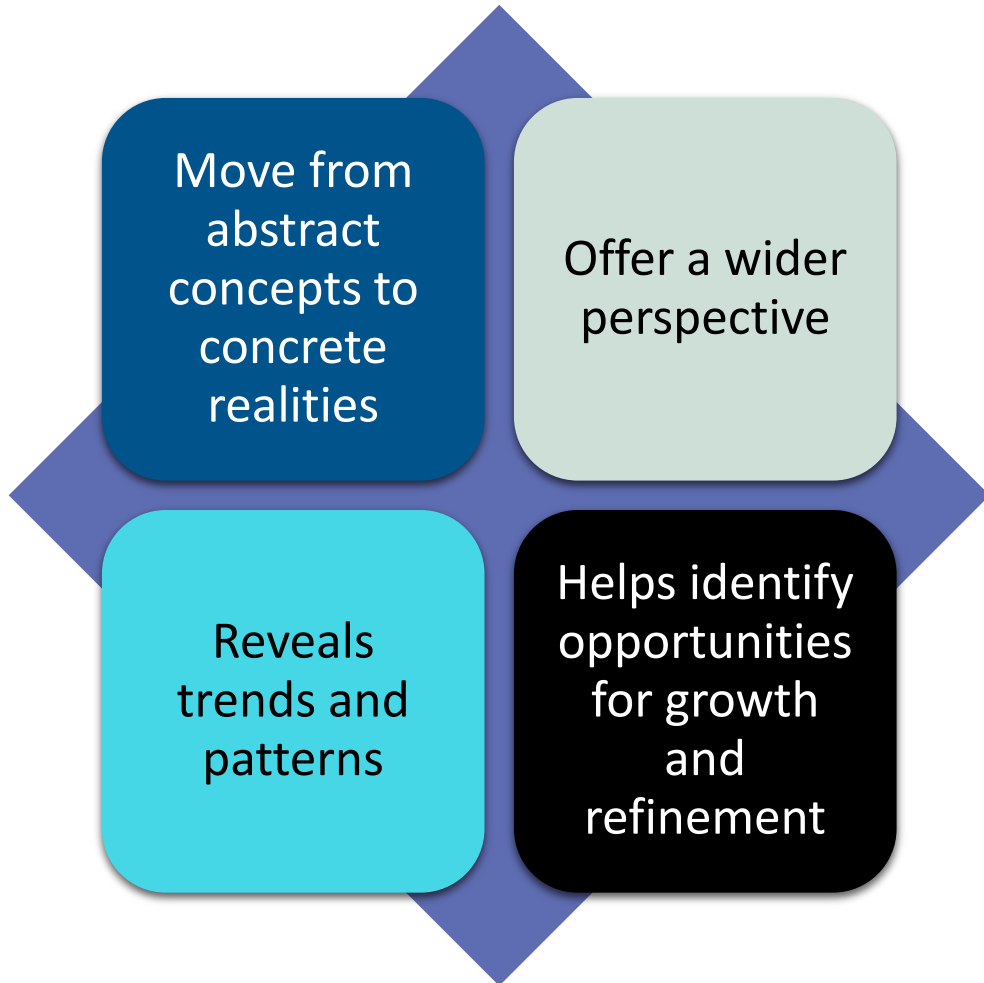
## APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.1

Agencies should develop and implement a comprehensive performance measurement system which should include process measures of supervision activities consistent with risk-need-responsivity theory, as well as performance outcomes for agencies and individuals on supervision.

## APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.8

Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices to systematically measure the progress of persons on community supervision and provide feedback.

# Data-Driven Improvements



# Limitations

Does not establish  
a causal  
relationship

Do not generally  
capture nuance  
and details of  
supervision

# Types of Performance Measures

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# Types of Measures



**Productivity** – Measures the volume of tasks completed



**Quality** – Measures satisfaction with the process or practice



**Efficiency** – Measures whether maximum outcomes are being produced

# Types of Measures

## Process

Measures whether an activity is performing as intended

### APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.2

Process measures should track compliance with policies and procedures by staff at all levels, ensuring fidelity to the risk-need-responsivity theory model.

# Types of Measures

## **Outcome**

Measures the effectiveness of a practice

### **APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.3**

Outcome measures should assess the impact or results of staff activities.

### **APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.4**

Outcome measures should assess the impact or results for individuals on supervision. Agencies should collect and report on outcome measures related to recidivism reduction, accountability, and other socially valued outcomes.

### **APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.7**

Agencies should collect and report data on the discharge status of persons completing community supervision, including those with successful discharge, early discharge for good performance, revocation, incarceration, and death.

# Performance Measurement Steps 1-4

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# Step 1: Understand Current Practices

Probation system map

Evaluate data capabilities

- Gather, store, and analyze necessary data
- Gap analysis
- Data quality

# Step 2: Develop Performance Measures

- Create measures that will drive continuous improvement
- Choose measures that align with the agency's mission
- Start with measures that are easy to obtain and supported by existing data
- Gradually expand the scope of measurement
  - Client demographics (race, ethnicity, gender, geography)
  - Offense type (misdemeanor, felony, non-violent, violent)

# Completion of Supervision (Example)

## Performance Measure

The percentage of people who complete probation successfully.

# Recidivism (Example)

## Performance Measure

The percentage of people who are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

# Skill-Based Interventions (Example)

## Performance Measure

The percentage of contacts with people who have a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) that include skill-based interventions.

# Recidivism Considerations

Measures new criminal activity

Use a consistent timeframe

Use a consistent definition

Consider data needed

## APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.5

A standard definition of recidivism should be developed and utilized across an agency. Using this definition, agencies should measure and report on recidivism of the community supervision population.

This definition should clearly distinguish new criminal activity from technical violations (failure to comply with the conditions of community supervision) and determine what behavior counts toward recidivism.

# Measures that Promote Success

Changes in risk  
assessment results

Enhancements in  
intrinsic  
motivation

Adherence to risk,  
need, responsiveness,  
and dosage

Client skill-building

Reinforcement  
strategies

Prosocial supports

# Step 3: Establish Baseline Data



Allows an agency to measure progress over time



Shows whether specific interventions are working



Assists in determining if meaningful changes are occurring



Assists in setting realistic and achievable goals

# Completion of Supervision (Example)

## **Performance Measure**

The percentage of people who complete probation successfully.

## **Baseline**

Existing data indicate that 54% of people complete probation successfully.

# Recidivism (Example)

## **Performance Measure**

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The percentage of people who are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

## **Baseline**

---

Existing data indicate that 69% of people are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing supervision.

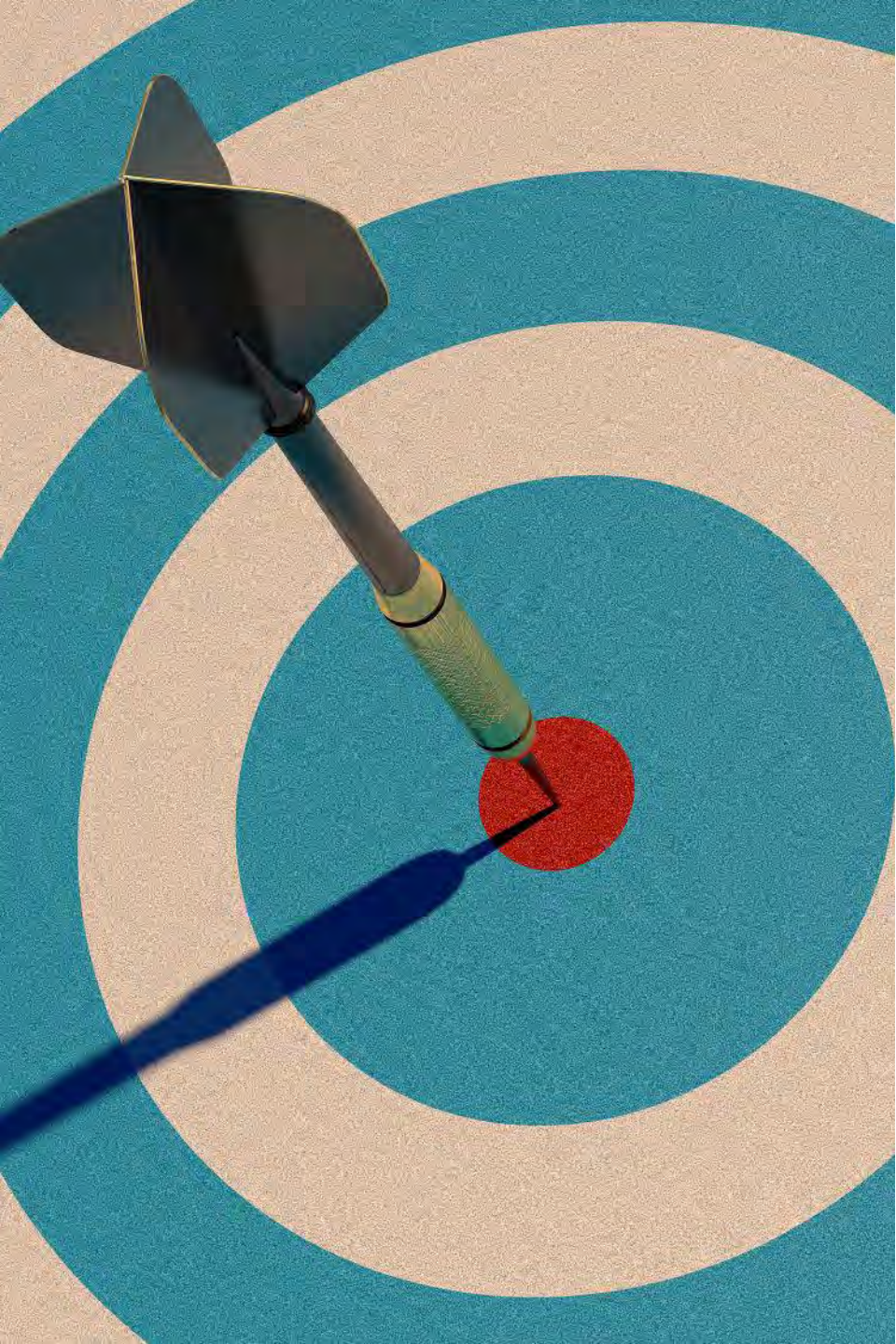
# Skill-Based Interventions (Example)

## **Performance Measure**

The percentage of contacts with people who have a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) that include skill-based interventions.

## **Baseline**

Existing data indicate that skill-based interventions are delivered in 20% of contacts with people who have a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher).



# Step 4: Plan Goals and Objectives

- Goals – represent the desired outcome
- Objectives
  - Short-term indicators that demonstrate progress toward goals
  - Describe what will change, by how much, and over what period
  - Should be aligned with the SMART principle
    - Specific
    - Measurable
    - Attainable
    - Realistic
    - Time-oriented
- Use baseline data to set goals and objectives
- Frame goals positively (e.g., arrest-free instead of arrest)

# Completion of Supervision (Example)

## **Performance Measure**

The percentage of people who complete probation successfully.

## **Baseline**

Existing data indicate that 54% of people complete probation successfully.

## **Goal**

By 2028, more than 60% of people will complete probation successfully.

## **Objective**

The percentage of people completing probation successfully will increase by 2% in each of the next three years.

# Recidivism (Example)

## **Performance Measure**

---

The percentage of people who are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

## **Baseline**

---

Existing data indicate that 69% of people are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

## **Goal**

---

By 2028, more than 75% of people will remain arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

## **Objective**

---

The percentage of people remaining arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation will increase by 2% in each of the next three years.

# Skill-Based Interventions (Example)

## Performance Measure

The percentage of contacts with people who have a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) that include skill-based interventions.

## Baseline

Existing data indicate that skill-based interventions are delivered in 20% of contacts with people who have a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher).

## Goal

By 2028, 50% of contacts with people who have a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) will include skill-based interventions.

## Objective

The percentage of people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) with a skill-based intervention during contact will increase by 10% in each of the next three years.

# Performance Measurement Steps 5-8

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# Step 5: Calculate Performance Measures

## Sources of data needed for data elements

- Agency's case management system
- Paper files
- Spreadsheets
- Criminal justice partner's data (data sharing agreements)

## Data fidelity

- Are the data fields being used correctly by staff?
- Do the data fields mean what they are intended to mean?
- Are you using consistent definitions?

# Completion of Supervision (Example)

## **Performance Measure**

The percentage of people who complete probation successfully.

## **Baseline**

Existing data indicate that 54% of people complete probation successfully.

## **Goal**

By 2028, more than 60% of people will complete probation successfully.

## **Objective**

The percentage of people completing probation successfully will increase by 2% in each of the next three years.

## **Data Elements**

- The total number of people completing probation successfully by year.
- The total number of people completing probation by year.

# Recidivism (Example)

## Performance Measure

The percentage of people who are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

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## Data Elements

- The total number of people completing probation who are arrest-free for new criminal activity by year.
- The total number of people completing probation by year.

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## Objective

The percentage of people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) with a skill-based intervention during contact will increase by 10% in each of the next

## Data Elements

- The total number of contacts with a skill-based intervention for people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) by year.
- The total number of contacts with people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) by year.

# Step 5: Calculate Performance Measures

- Percentages
  - Useful when you want to express a proportion of the whole
  - Often used to compare different groups or time periods
- Ratios
  - Used when comparing two types of associated practices
  - Often used in conjunction with averages
- Averages
  - Used to measure efficiency in practice
  - Often used to compare different time periods

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## Goal

By 2028, more than 60% of people will complete probation successfully.

## Objective

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## Data Elements

- The total number of people completing probation successfully by year.
- The total number of people completing probation by year.

## Formula

Divide the number of people completing probation successfully by the total number of people completing probation in the same period. Multiply it by 100 to obtain a percentage.

# Recidivism (Example)

## Performance Measure

The percentage of people who are arrest-free for new criminal activity within three years of completing probation.

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## Data Elements

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## Data Elements

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- The total number of contacts with people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) by year.

## Formula

Divide the total number of contacts with a skill-based intervention for people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) by the total number of contacts with people with a lower likelihood of success (moderate risk or higher) in the same period. Multiply it by 100 to obtain a percentage.



## Step 6: Analyze Progress

- Compare actual performance against established benchmarks
- Determine whether goals and objectives are being met
- Discrepancies between goals and outcomes may reveal areas for improvement
  - Gaps in service delivery
  - Inconsistency in policy application
  - Other unforeseen barriers to success



## Step 6: Analyze Progress

- Do the data accurately reflect the agency's practices?
- Do unexpected data appear in the set?
- Are there gaps in the data?
- Is the agency measuring what it intended to measure
- Does the definition of the measure require any revisions?
- Do the data need to be refined?
- Are there external factors that could contribute to the outcomes?
- What improvements are necessary to ensure more accurate data collection?

# Step 7: Communicate with Partners and the Community



Present data in a straightforward manner



Use easy-to-understand graphics and language



Use visual tools like charts, graphs, and ensure they have a legend or definitions for context



Provide explanations of the methodology



Tailor to the audience

# Step 7: Communicate with Partners and the Community



**Decide the frequency of calculating the measures and reporting**



**Develop a communication plan**

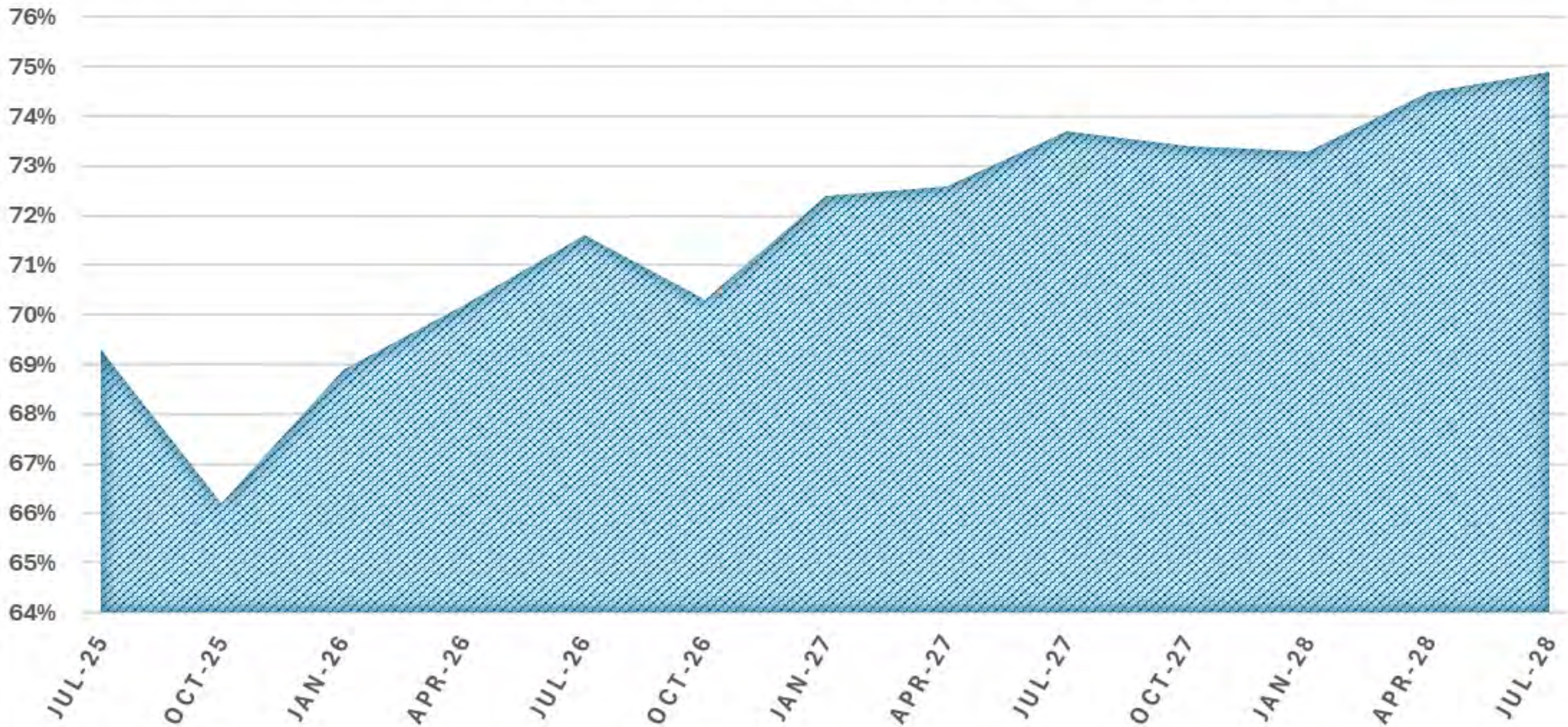
# Data Dashboard



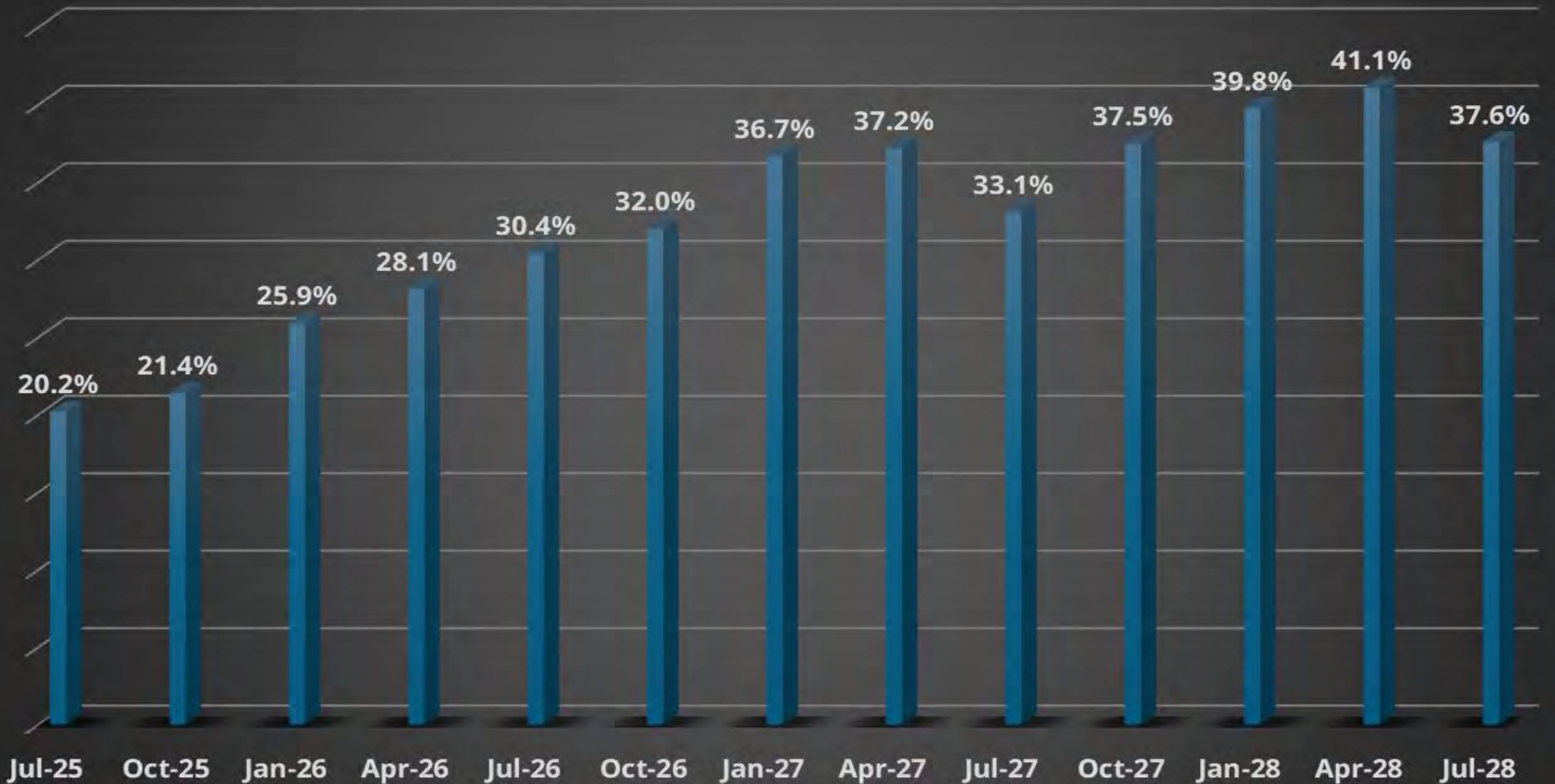
# PROBATION CLOSED SUCCESSFULLY, JULY 2025-JULY 2028



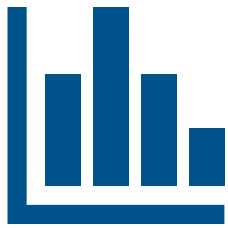
# INDIVIDUALS REMAINING ARREST-FREE THREE YEARS POST SUPERVISION, JULY 2025-JULY 2028



# Contacts with Skill-Based Interventions



# Step 8: Continuously Improve



Use the data for learning and making improvements



Use to inform supervision quality, fairness, and outcomes



Should not be used to create blame or for staff discipline



## Step 8: Continuously Improve

- Leverage baseline and trend information to identify key areas needing improvement
- Evaluate potential priorities by considering
  - Public safety
  - Risk reduction
  - Public perception
  - Anticipated impact
- Set realistic and attainable benchmarks to guide improvement
- Develop specific strategies that will address the identified need

# Taking a Deeper Dive

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# Taking a Deeper Dive

- Collect data on race, ethnicity, gender, and geographical area
- Creates ways to identify disparities in how different groups experience probation
- Uncovers potential biases
- Ensure policies and practices are being applied equitably across diverse populations
- Aids in developing targeted interventions that may mitigate identified disparities

## **APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.6**

Agencies should report recidivism data by risk level, offense type, time on community supervision, gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, and other relevant criteria.

# Relative Rate Index (RRI)

- Statistical tool (often used in the juvenile justice system)
- Used to measure racial and ethnic disparities
- Compares the rate of involvement for minority groups to the rate of majority groups
- RRI of 1.0 means the rates are equal
- Values above 1.0 indicate disproportionate representation for minority groups, below 1.0 indicates the opposite



Missouri Juvenile Justice System  
<https://mjja.org/images/resources/dmc/how-to-calculate-relative-rate-index.pdf>

# Taking a Deeper Dive

- Community impact and qualitative measures
  - Incorporate measures that focus on community/stakeholder satisfaction with probation activities
  - Incorporate measures that focus on client satisfaction with the probation experience
- Expert collaboration and program evaluation
  - Transition to more advanced metrics
  - Utilize statisticians
  - Partner with a local university for program evaluation to establish causal relationships

## **APPA Community Supervision Standard 11.9**

Agencies should support and engage in internal research relevant to their programs as well as research conducted by outside professionals.

# Key Takeaways

1

Start small and build gradually

2

Focus on measures that reflect mission and values

3

Use the data to learn, communicate, and improve

# Probation Performance Measures Resource Guide



OCTOBER 2025

## Probation Performance Measures Resource Guide



# Evaluation

Please take time to complete an evaluation for today's webinar



# Contact Us

## **Troy Hatfield**

thatfield@cepp.com

Senior Manager

Center for Effective Public Policy

## **Melissa Stephenson**

mstephenson@grantcounty.in.gov

Director

Grant County Court Services



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