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OFF RISKING: OFFENDER RISK ASSESSMENT AND THE CORRECTIONAL  
ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION SYSTEM

By

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Off-Risking: Offender Risk Assessment and the Correctional Assessment and Intervention System

Chairperson: Dr. Dan Doyle

In 2010 the State of Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) licensed the Correctional Assessment and Intervention System (CAIS) to address the high rate of recidivism among Co-occurring and Native American offenders. Montana DOC reported a significantly lower rate of revocation among the offenders assessed by the CAIS. Quantitative and Qualitative analyses were conducted to determine what aspects of the program facilitated the lower rates of revocation. Results of this analysis determined that several factors acting in concert contributed to the lower rates of revocation with the most meaningful contribution being that of rapport built between the probation officer and offender.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2010 the State of Montana reported recidivism to be 37.6% as measured by three years post release. For the same year, Native American recidivism was reported to be 33% higher than the general populations (Montana DOC 2009), resulting in 50.01% rate of recidivism. In an effort to decrease this disparity and reduce recidivism rates of co-occurring populations, those offenders with both mental illness and chemical dependency issues, the Montana Department of Corrections received a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The goal of this grant was to implement more community corrections interventions for high risk Native American and co-occurring offenders in the rural areas of Montana and decrease participating offender's recidivism rates by 15%. This would be measured by 12 months post-release revocation rates. To this end, the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) invested grant funds through two major avenues.

First, the Montana DOC licensed an evidence-based risk assessment tool, the Correctional Assessment and Interventions System (CAIS). This tool was licensed from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). Second, DOC hired eight specialized probation/parole officers to serve from August 1, 2010 to January 31, 2012 to be trained in and to implement the CAIS for the Native American and co-occurring offender populations.

Specialized officers were given separate directives from the traditional probation programs as part of their efforts in supervising the Native American and co-occurring populations. Specialized officers were given smaller caseloads in order to fulfill their functions. These functions included working closely with the surrounding communities and creating new partnerships with tribal leaders. Each officer was responsible for a Native-American reservation,

and the surrounding community. Four of the officers traveled between their offices and the reservations to meet the needs of the offenders in rural areas and the mandates of their supervision.

The CAIS assessment tool, used by the specialized officers combines the risk/needs assessment with a Case Management Classification (CMC) tool with supervisory strategies (CAIS Manual, 2009). The CAIS, as created and maintained by the National Council of Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), uses an actuarial approach to measure and assess the risks and needs of offenders. Actuarial assessments apply statistical and mathematical methods for an objective-based approach to measure risk. CAIS is not utilized in the traditional offender assessment programs.

Currently, Montana DOC reports that the grant-funded specialized programs have achieved positive results in offender participation and lower recidivism and return rates within the last year (Bunke, 2011). The DOC's license for the CAIS assessment tool expired in January of 2012, and due to cost CAIS will not be relicensed. Montana DOC is also considering alternative offender assessment tools to use in its traditional programs.

The Montana DOC would like the positive results of the specialized programs to continue and see another 3-5% decrease in recidivism rates. Additionally, the DOC wants to ascertain the reasons for the reduction in recidivism rates in the specialized programs in order to apply the significant factors, if applicable, towards its traditional programs.

To realize these goals, the Montana DOC has asked me to determine what aspects of the grant-funded specialized intervention program have caused the reduction in recidivism and

return rates. Researching the DOC specialized probation program and risk assessment tools with a focus on the CAIS tool will facilitate these goals.

This research gives the Montana DOC considerable significant and focused research on what it is in their specialized probation/parole program that is working as seen through lower revocation rates.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Risk assessment in Penology**

The past 40 years have seen dramatic change in the focus of penology, rehabilitation and corrections. Prevailing political rhetoric of the 1970s promoted a “return to law and order”. Robert Martinson’s (1974) infamous article, “What Works?”, asserted that nothing works in correctional rehabilitative programs. The “tough on crime” furor from the 1980s and 90s created changes in numerous directions for corrections. Policies included “zero tolerance”, “three strikes you’re out” and other recommendations that advocated harsher judgments and punishments. Changes in drug law, gang law, and offender sentencing ultimately resulted in prison overpopulation and a crisis in corrections and rehabilitation philosophies (Lutze, Johnson, Clear, Latessa and Slate, 2012). Costs of these new policies were staggering and need for effective risk assessment and correctional rehabilitative programs was inescapable.

In order to address these issues, correctional communities’ adopted new techniques termed evidence-based practices. Evidence-based practices (EBP) integrate proven researched methods with practitioner expertise to achieve the best possible outcome for decision making and implementation of programs. For community corrections Latessa and Lowencamp (2006) outlined eight evidenced-based practices that work for reducing recidivism. These are: actuarial risk assessment tools, enhancing offender motivation to change, targeting interventions for offenders, skill training for probation/parole officers, engage support in natural communities, on-going measure of the process, and continued feedback to improve the process. Actuarial risk assessment tools began as an evaluation of an offenders risk to the public and potential risk of re-

offense. Current risk assessment tools are far more sophisticated than when they were originally conceived.

In 1928 Sociologist E. W. Burgess constructed a prediction table identifying factors such as criminal history and social demographics as crucial components in predicting recidivism (Hurwitz and Christiansen 1983). Glueck and Glueck (1950), created a predictive model using 402 factors for recidivism among juvenile males, using criminal history and social background as main contributors in their analysis of recidivism. They rejected the predominate thought of their time that juvenile crime was strongly related to gang mentality and cultural influences, instead focusing on “family drama-affection relationships”.

These studies and the respective research are the genesis of newer and refined offender assessments that focus on what is now termed static risk factors. Static risk factors are immutable historic factors, those characteristics of an offender that cannot be changed. Several of these factors are criminal history, family background and offender’s age at the time of first offense. All these factors have been found to predict recidivism.

### **Risk Assessment Tools**

Professional and clinical judgments utilizing static risk factors constituted what are now termed 1<sup>st</sup> generation risk assessment tools. First generation risk assessment tools were not actuarial assessments. Second generation risk assessment tools generally used empirical approaches employing an actuarial basis for assessments. The methods emphasized risk prediction, brevity and efficiency. They had little or no theoretical background, lacked treatment applications and neglected the dynamic risk factors (Brennan, Dieterich, and Ehret 2009). An

example would be the Salient Factor Score (Hoffman 1994) which is six item criminal history assessment, still used in the State of Connecticut to determine inmate eligibility for probation.

Dynamic risk factors are those factors regarding an offender's characteristics that can change, this is an important distinction from the static risk factors. Examples would be attitudes, substance use and social relationships. Dynamic risk factors, now termed criminogenic needs, correlate with criminal behavior and likelihood of re-offense (Andrews, Bonta and Hoge 1990). The dynamic nature of these needs makes it possible to specifically target problematic issues through treatment programs for behavioral and cognitive change. Targeting offender's needs has proven to reduce the rate of recidivism and are key domains in newer risk assessments tools (Andrews and Bonta, 1994).

The criminogenic needs principle is based on the recognition that as human beings everyone has social needs. Some needs may be met through anti-social behaviors and associates. Thus a criminal mindset can begin and be reinforced (Ogloff and Davis 2004). Criminogenic needs are strongly correlated with criminal conduct and can be measured by examining an offender's emotional stability, attitudes, vocational achievement, and their general self-regulation and impulsivity. Other examples of criminogenic needs factors include antisocial attitudes, substance abuse, and familial and education problems (Latessa, Lemke, Makarios, and Lowenkamp 2008). These factors have proven to be associated with recidivism but are amenable to change and are thus proven to be useful for predictive, preventative and rehabilitative purposes. As the need for and practice of risk assessment increased, so did the research and sophistication of the tools.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of assessment tools no longer focused solely on risks, but also included criminogenic needs as a primary domain to be measured. Utilizing empirical and theory guided approaches with broader categories of criminogenic factors, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation assessment tools began to focus on the ‘big eight’ risk/needs factors. The literature concerning levels of supervision and probation conditions suggests that these primary ‘big eight’ factors have the best predictive validity and reliability regarding recidivism. The dynamic need column in the table below provides potential strategies for intervention of criminal behaviors. The following table, as adapted from Latessa and colleagues in 2008, describes these factors.

## Major Risk and/or Need Factors

FACTOR	STATIC/DYNAMIC RISK	DYNAMIC NEED STRATEGIES
History of antisocial Behavior	Early/continuing involvement in a number and variety of antisocial acts in variety of settings	Build noncriminal alternative behavior in risky situations
Antisocial personality Pattern	Adventurous pleasure seeking, weak self-control restlessly aggressive	Build problem-solving skills, self-management skills, anger management and coping skills
Antisocial cognition	Attitudes, values, beliefs, and rationalizations that support crime; cognitive emotional states of anger resentment, and defiance; criminal versus reform id.	Reduce antisocial cognition, recognize risky thinking and feeling, build up alternative less risky thinking and feeling adopt a reform and/or anti- criminal identity
Antisocial associates	Close association with criminal others and relative Isolation from anti-criminal others; immediate socialothers Support for crime	Reduce association with criminal others and enhance association with anti-criminal
Family and /or Marital	Two key elements are nurturance and/or caring and monitoring and /or Supervision	Reduce conflict, build positive relationship, enhance monitoring and/or supervision enhance performance, rewards and satisfactions
School and /or Work	Low levels of performance and satisfactions in school and/or work	Enhance performance rewards, and satisfactions
Leisure and/or Recreation	Low levels of involvement and satisfactions in anti-criminal pursuits	Enhance involvement, rewards, and satisfactions
Substance Abuse	Abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs	Reduce substance abuse reduce the personal and Interpersonal supports for Substance-orientated behavior

Several different theories are used in 3<sup>rd</sup> generation risk/needs assessment tools. Depending on the particular tool, the theories used for the creation of the measured scales [questions asked to the offender for assessment] can include elements of general personality theory and the social psychology of crime, with particular attention to social learning and social cognition theories (Andrews, Bonta and Wormith 2006). Other contributions include social learning constructs that consider antisocial contagion and antisocial associations (Pratt and Cullen 2005). Clear parallels can be seen between Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (Sutherland and Cressey and Luckenbill 1992) and Robert Merton's Strain Theory (Merton 1938). An example of questions that are guided by theory, specifically Sutherland's Differential Association theory, would consider the offender's friends/associates, and if the offender identifies with the anti-criminal attitude learned from the offender's peer-group.

An example of a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation tool is the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), created by D. A. Andrews and James Bonta in 1995 (Andrews and Bonta 2007). The LSI-R assessment tool measures static factors and criminogenic needs (dynamic factors) through a survey of offender attributes and offender situations, within a relevant context for making decisions about appropriate levels of supervision and rehabilitation. Based primarily on social learning explanations, the following are the scales involved in the LSI-R with the number of items in each scale in parenthesis:

- ❖ Criminal History (10)
- ❖ Education/Employment (10)
- ❖ Financial (2)
- ❖ Family/Marital (4)
- ❖ Accommodation (3)

- ❖ Leisure/Recreation (2)
- ❖ Companions (5)
- ❖ Alcohol/Drug Problems (9)
- ❖ Emotional/Personal (5)
- ❖ Attitudes/Orientation (4)

The LSI-R is considered a brief assessment tool and has several versions. Versions include LSI-R: SV which is a screening instrument and the LSI/CMI which includes a comprehensive case management tool. The LSI-R is not a 4<sup>th</sup> generation tool by itself, but with the added elements it incorporates into the original version, the LSI/CMI contains necessary components to be considered a 4<sup>th</sup> generation assessment tool.

Fourth generation tools such as the Correctional Assessment and Intervention System (CAIS), Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sentencing (COMPAS), and the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) incorporate a broader range of theoretical backgrounds, risks/needs factors, and more advanced statistical methods than 3<sup>rd</sup> generation assessment tools (Brennan et al. 2009).

Case management plans and supervisory strategies are also included in a format that serves as a linkage between theory and practice. These assessment tools integrate case management plans with web-based criminal justice websites that maintain and store the records of the assessments and case management plans. This may be advantageous for many correctional facilities, because they do not have to invest in any new hardware or storage space within their offices.

The COMPAS assessment tool utilizes various theoretical constructs such as: low self-control, strain theory, social exclusion, social control, and opportunity theory (Brennan and Oliver, 2000). The ORAS uses a general theory of low self-control, among others, as its theoretical basis. All four of these 4<sup>th</sup> generation assessment tools, LSI-R, CAIS, COMPAS and ORAS, incorporate the ‘big eight’ risk/needs factors and utilize evidenced-based principles for effective classification. These principles advance actuarial assessments to identify dynamic risk factors, potential barriers to treatments, and recidivism prediction.

Predictive validity for the 4<sup>th</sup> generation risk tools varies. The definition of recidivism varies from state-to-state. Each state decides independently what length of time to use to measure recidivism. This varies from six-months to three years. Additionally, one state may find a significant predictive value in an assessment tool, and the next state will find a modest predictive value from the same assessment tool. Levels of training and amount of offender contact with probation/parole officers also vary from state to state. Nevertheless, all four of the assessment tools have proved to have some predictive value. A national meta-analysis concerning recidivism showed a median 10% reduction in recidivism (Cullen and Jonson 2011:163). At the time of this statistical analysis, EBP were the main thrust of community corrections in the United States, thus suggesting that EBP are working.

### **Correctional Assessment and Intervention System (CAIS)**

The Montana DOC used the CAIS assessment tool for its grant-funded specialized intervention and rehabilitation programs for a total of two years. This system is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation tool that incorporates supervision strategies with a case management classification (CMC) and a

risk/needs assessment evaluation for rehabilitative and predictive approaches. CAIS incorporates Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques in the offender interview process. These features generate a more comprehensive approach than the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation tool currently being used by the Montana DOC for the traditional probation programs.

CAIS has separate assessments for men and women. There are 82 assessment questions in the men's interview and 88 assessment questions in the women's interview (CAIS Manual 2009). Questions are categorized into four major sections. They are as follows with the number of items of each scale in parenthesis:

- ❖ General Information (46)
- ❖ Objective History (20)
- ❖ Behavioral Observations (8)
- ❖ Interviewer Impressions (8)

Eleven items assess static risk that are part of the "big eight" factors in evidence based practices (EBP) for risk and recidivism. Sixteen items are based on the interviewer's professional opinion, impressions and observations of the offender. The final 55 items assess the criminogenic needs of the offender, with an additional six items in the women's assessment. The focus on the needs of the offender marks one significant distinction between the CAIS and the DOC's traditional assessment tool.

Motivational Interviewing techniques that are integrated into the interviewing process are based on principles put forth by clinical Psychologist, Dr. William R. Miller in 1983. These techniques have since been refined and are considered part of EBP for eliciting change in drug

and alcohol abusers (Miller and Rollnick 2002). Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, client-centered method that focuses on identifying and resolving the individual's ambivalence to changing their behavior in a non-confrontational manner.

There are several subsections that concern needs in the CAIS centering on offense patterns, emotional concerns, future plans, present problems and educational, residential, and relational life adjustments. A sample question from the offense pattern subsection is: "How did you decide to commit these offenses?" This question looks for the action process of the offender, was the crime planned, is there a pattern, or was there an emotional or monetary component to the crime. This is an example of an open-ended question contained in the CAIS, which is also a technique of MI designed to facilitate dialog and discourage limited responses. An offender describes the offense in the context of their perceptions and feelings, and the assessment answers consider the potential answers of the offender for scoring and case management. The intention is to create an environment where the officer investigates an offender in a non-coercive, non-confrontational manner while establishing rapport. Establishing rapport with the offender increases the likelihood that the offender will buy into the program.

During the interview the officer expresses empathy, supports self-efficacy and provokes self-reflection on the part of the offender (Miller et. al. 2002). The goal of the offender's self-reflection is to increase the offender's awareness of their own thought processes, behaviors and actions in an effort to promote change that encompasses the entirety of the offender's life: social, work, recreation, familial, and personal.

Most of the assessment questions are open-ended, allowing for extended responses that penetrate the surface of self-reported data to extract information surrounding the offender's behaviors and actions. Interviews take a considerable amount of time. The average length of time for interviews is between 1 ½ and 2 hours. Interviews are highly structured and each question the officer asks includes potential prompts and follow-up questions. Instructions on how to score the offender's answers are also included in the assessment. The assessment is scored using a complex set of research-based scoring rules (CAIS Manual 2009:7). Based on the score, the offender's risks, needs, and general characteristics are identified and offenders are assigned to a specific supervision strategy.

Offender characteristics are described in terms of pro-social values, stable/unstable lifestyles, offense motivations, offense patterns, self-destructive patterns and social/vocational skills. Supervision strategies are devised based on empirical evidence. The strategies take into account identified expected attitudes and behaviors, potential barriers to rehabilitation and reasons why individuals offend--such as external stressors or criminal orientation. Goals of the supervision strategies include potential crisis resolution and appropriate service referrals that will best serve the offender to return to pro-social stable life patterns and disrupt the old environmental patterns by replacing them with new ones. Service referrals are based on offender needs that were determined through the scoring of the assessment.

CAIS identifies eight possible needs based on the relationship to criminal behavior. These identified needs are incorporated into the offender's case plan. These are: Social Inadequacy, Vocational Inadequacy, Emotional Needs, Drug/Alcohol Abuses, Temporary

Situations, Criminal Orientation, Family History, and Manipulative Behavior. The needs are described as follows (CAIS Manual, 2009):

- Social Inadequacy—An offender’s social skill abilities in dealing with others, their ability to survive in society and care for themselves.
- Vocational Inadequacy—An offender’s ability or skills to obtain and maintain reasonably paying employment.
- Emotional Needs—the degree of emotional problems in the offender’s life.
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse—an offender who has an extended history of these problems and generally commits crime because of these issues.
- Temporary/Isolated Situations—An unusual or temporary situation that is unlikely to reoccur.
- Criminal Orientation—The offender believes that criminal behavior is acceptable and an appropriate way to live and retrieve income.
- Family History—Offender had parental family problems experienced during childhood and adolescence.
- Manipulative Behavior—The offender has a need to prove themselves excessively and to “beat the system” through manipulative behaviors.

Service referrals are based on the identified need, and could include various types of counseling, vocational training, healthcare and training in problem-solving techniques. The average number of identified needs is three. The case plan created prioritizes the problems and needs, providing a framework of systematic goals for the offender to achieve as part of their supervision mandates.

Accurate and effective operation of the CAIS tool requires officers to attend six weeks of specialized training in offender interview techniques, general use and interpretation of the assessment output and conducting the follow-up reassessments. Training in interview techniques includes rapport-building, removing barriers that discouraged communication, detecting subtle cues given by the offender, and suspending judgmental attitudes toward the offender.

Specialized officers were also required to conduct reassessments, which were substantially shorter in length of time with 30 items in the questionnaire, and the reassessments were generally administered about 6 months after the initial assessment. Specialized officers conducted only 15 reassessments during the two years that Montana DOC used the CAIS tool. Reassessments measured risk through 11 questions, as did the original assessment. Risk questions for reassessment were generally focused on the present legal, residential, and employment conditions of the offender. General questions of the reassessment focused on relationships, any drug/alcohol use changes, and mental/emotional well-being of the offender.

Once the initial interview is complete, the assessment is scored and the offender is assigned into one group out of five possibilities: Selective Intervention-situational, Selective Intervention-treatment, Casework Control, Environmental Structure, and Limit Setting. Each of these groups has an associated supervision strategy that correlates with the risk/needs assessments to provide a cohesive multi-pronged approach. The five supervision strategies as expressed in the CAIS manual are as follows:

1. Selective Intervention/Situational (SI-S)—Offenders generally have the most pro-social values, positive adjustments, and are likely to be employed 90% of the time as

- they tend to have academic and vocational skills. Their criminal behavior(s) are usually brought on by an external stressor. Needs referrals are generally not extensive, and probation officers only intervene with the offender when assistance is needed. These offenders are generally not repeat offenders and can be released from supervision once the offense has been resolved, if the offense was a non-assaultive offense.
2. Selective Intervention/Treatment (SI-T)—Offenders have some of the same characteristics as SI-S except they have a longer history with chemical abuse, sex offense, and/or emotional disturbance. These offenders are also less likely to need extensive referrals. Supervision requires the probation officer to monitor the offender's active participation in assigned treatment needs and only intervene when a serious problem occurs.
  3. Casework Control (CC)—Offenders have a predominate instability in their lives. Offenders generally have more than one crisis occurring simultaneously, typically repeating the instability of their childhood. Referrals to mental health agencies are often used to target the most serious problems. Probation officers are to monitor them closely for attendance and engage the offender to express what they have learned and how they apply to their lives.
  4. Environmental Structure (ES)—These offenders tend to lack social and vocational skills and engage in criminal activity due to lower ability to solve problems and social gullibility. Common referrals for this group are often vocational, adaptive behavior learning and I.Q. testing to place offender into programs that are suited to his/her

level of functioning. Because the ES offenders is easily influences by others and has low impulse control, the probation officers is to positively structure the offender's environment as much as possible. This includes living, working and associating with pro-social peers and role models.

5. Limit Setters (LS)—These offenders have a degree of comfort associating with the criminal lifestyle and are generally motivated by power and excitement. They tend to view being successful as a criminal lifestyle rather than having pro-social goals. Needs referral for this group are generally psychological consultations for probation officers to develop case plans. Limit Setters need constant vigilance from probation officers and constant police presence to enforce even the trivial dictates of probation, as these offenders tend to be manipulative and look for every advantage.

The risk/needs portion of the CAIS has combined elements from the Level of Service Inventory –Revised (LSI-R) created by Andrews and Bonta and other assessment tools that proved to have good reliability and validity. This portion of the system incorporates psychological theories and criminological theories. The case planning component utilizes aspects of an objectives-based case planning system created by criminologist Dr. Todd Clear (Clear 1977). Dr. Clear adapted Social Psychologist Dr. Kurt Lewin Force-Field Analysis that was conceived in 1951.

Force-Field Analysis was originally created to analyze reasons why an event occurs in time and as a technique for planning how to modify frequencies of the occurrence of the undesirable event (Tucker, 1979). Lewin posited that any current level of being is in a state of equilibrium between driving forces that encourage movement/action and restraining forces that

discourage movement. Thus, frequency of action will be determined by the various forces acting on the particular social event. Changing the forces that created that act can then change the potential for the undesirable act. This includes the driving forces and the restraining forces.

The target of change is then not the act itself, but the forces that determine the frequency of the act. For this to work, change needs to occur on both sides of the force-field. For offenders to change frequencies of illegal behaviors forces that exist in the client and their environment must be identified and disrupted and new forces put into place. This is the basis for the case plan component in the CAIS instrument which organizes the needs and the supervision strategies for the appropriate approach to offenders. The supervision strategies are based on the composite data from the assessment for both risk and need to provide the most effective supervision approach. Case planning in the CAIS incorporates research propositions of Paul Gendreau and Robert Ross for potentially more successful intervention programs. Gendreau and Ross advocated the importance of utilizing more than one treatment method, encouraging active cooperation between agencies, and understanding the risk/needs factors and individual differences of offenders (Gendreau and Ross, 1979) (Gendreau and Groggin, 1996).

CAIS is an amalgamation of many different academic views on offenders and what may produce results for lowering recidivism. The focus of this research project is to determine what aspects of the CAIS contributed to the reduction of revocation rates for the Native American and co-occurring populations. Information gathered and analyzed has the potential to be applied to the DOC traditional probation/parole programs in the pursuit of lower recidivism rates. This is a difficult task because community-based corrections practitioners who work with adult offenders are confronted with expanding and increasing case loads, conflicting guidelines, and significant

loss of funding. Corrections policies and practices have to balance the overcrowding in prisons, high costs of incarceration, need for intervention programs, and safety of the public (Lutze et al., 2012). Thus, a great demand for effective offender risk/needs assessment and case management supervisory strategies not only exists but is one crucial part to achieving the vital goals of correctional institutions.

### **Montana DOC Traditional Assessment Tool**

The Montana DOC traditional assessment tool is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation assessment instrument, created by Dr. Patricia Hardyman in 1992. It assesses the potential risk level using 14 items based on static factors, with a brief semi-structured interview. Each item has 3-5 options to choose from with no contingency questions or potential prompts for the officer to ask the offender. There is no extended training for assessment. According to the traditional probation officers, average time for this assessment is 15-30 minutes. The same assessment tool is used for both men and women. It does not have a structured approach to the interview or incorporate offender's needs domain, case management plan, or specified supervisory strategies.

Standards for supervising offenders are set by DOC policy. Each offender, whether low risk or high risk, is automatically supervised for the first 3 months at a higher supervision level. Potential needs of the offender are based on the conditions of release and/or the professional judgments of the officer.

## **METHODS**

To be as comprehensive as possible, IRB approval was obtained and a mixed-methods approach was utilized. Quantitative data was collected to analyze the rate of revocation and contributory factors, all were based on a random sample. Each of the offenders evaluated with the CAIS instrument had an equal probability of being chosen. As there were seven different specialized officers, each officer's probationers were placed into a pool and randomly selected by DOC number, for equal probability of selection and no potential bias.

Qualitative data regarding how well CAIS works was acquired through interviews with seven of the eight CAIS specialized probation/parole officers. Seven traditional probation/parole officers were also interviewed for comparison purposes. Four offenders were also interviewed to acquire their impressions and experiences with the CAIS.

### **Quantitative Methodology**

The purpose of this research is to understand the different aspects of the CAIS that contributed to lower recidivism. To do this, quantitative data on revocation, assigned risk level, designated strategy group, specified prioritized needs, age, and gender were gathered and assessed. These variables were utilized for a descriptive statistical analysis to examine tendencies and summarize the data. As the CAIS is prominently an assessment and intervention instrument, a statistical predictive model of revocation will not be calculated. There were no control groups to be analyzed for those purposes and the low amount of reassessments conducted severely restricts any quality data for forecasting CAIS predictions of revocation and risk. Data

for the analysis were retrieved from the Montana DOC and the NCCD concerning the offenders assessed by the CAIS.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

The qualitative data acquisition was the most time consuming. CAIS specialized officers were stationed at various parts of the state and some were, practically speaking, only available via telephone. Traditional officers were available in several cities. Interviews with the traditional officers were conducted in person.

CAIS officers were located in Glasgow, Butte, Havre, Polson, Cut Bank, and Hamilton. I traveled to Butte, Polson, and Hamilton to conduct face-to-face interviews with four specialized officers. The remaining three officers were interviewed telephonically. All the traditional officer interviews were conducted face-to-face. I interviewed traditional officers in Hamilton, Butte, Polson, and Missoula. All of these interviewees signed an informed consent form and all interviews were audio recorded.

There was a separate set of questions for the specialized CAIS officers and the traditional officers. The specialized officer interview questions required more exploration as the CAIS is the focus of this research. Questions asked of the specialized officers are in Appendix A, and those asked of the traditional officers are in Appendix B.

All the questions were open-ended and broad. I wanted to avoid “stock” answers and allow the interviewees to express their thoughts and observations perceived through a lens of their experiences, education and training. All officers were assured that their individual answers would be kept strictly confidential, that how they answered questions would have no impact on

their job status, and that I was interested in their frank assessment of the CAIS and traditional assessment tools.

Upon approval from the IRB office at the University of Montana, I attempted to conduct interviews with offenders who had participated in the CAIS assessment. This was difficult for several reasons. The termination of the CAIS license, time constraints for the offender, and willingness of the offender, proved to be significant obstacles. Of the 14 offenders approached for interviews at the offices of the probation/parole departments, ten offenders refused and four offenders agreed. Before the interview started, I informed each offender that their cooperation was in no way required and would have no impact on their probation/parole. I gave each offender an informed consent form to read and sign and told each offender that their responses would be kept confidential and no names would be attached to the interview or the research. Offender questions were also open-ended and as non-invasive as possible. Potential follow-up questions were contingent upon the answers of the initial questions. A small private room was made be available at each office for the interview. Questions asked of the offenders are in Appendix C.

At no time was there any pressure from the DOC or myself on the offender to submit to an interview. After the interviews were conducted, I transcribed all the interviews and destroyed the audio recordings. The transcriptions were utilized for the analysis and no names were used as identifiers. All the interviewee's identities were kept confidential. After the analysis is complete, all the transcriptions will be destroyed.

Copies of the CAIS risk assessment and manual were obtained and the content analyzed concerning the risk/needs assessment, the case management, supervision strategies, and approaches toward offender assessment interviews. The traditional probation/parole risk assessment was also obtained and analyzed for comparison purposes.

### **Probation/Parole Officer Interviewees**

Five female and two male CAIS specialized officers were interviewed. Two officers claimed Native American ancestry. The experiential and educational backgrounds were diverse. One officer has an M.A. degree in Education and experience working with the Native Americans for several years. One officer had a background in paralegal work and worked several years with probation officers interviewing offenders. Some officers had Master's degrees in Social Work and Bachelor's degrees in mental health services and had experience working with drug abusers, at risk children, pregnant teens, juvenile offenders and Native Americans. Lastly, there were officers who had worked as case managers in juvenile detention facilities before becoming probation officers. Specialized officers' offender work-related experiences ranged from 18 months to eight years.

Four female and three male traditional officers were interviewed. Most of these officers had Bachelor's degrees in either Sociology or Criminal Justice. Range of probation/parole work experience was two to eight years.

### **Offender Interviewees**

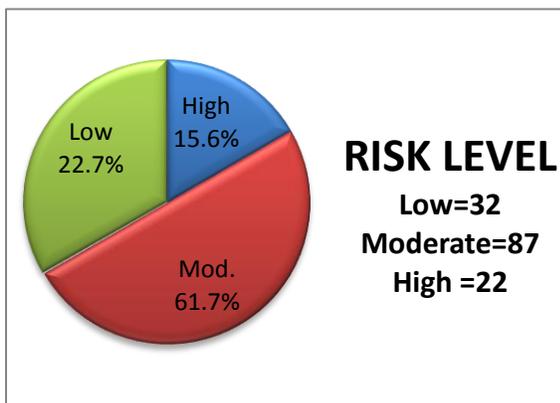
Two female and two male offenders volunteered and were interviewed. Three of the four offenders had been on the traditional probation program before they changed programs and were



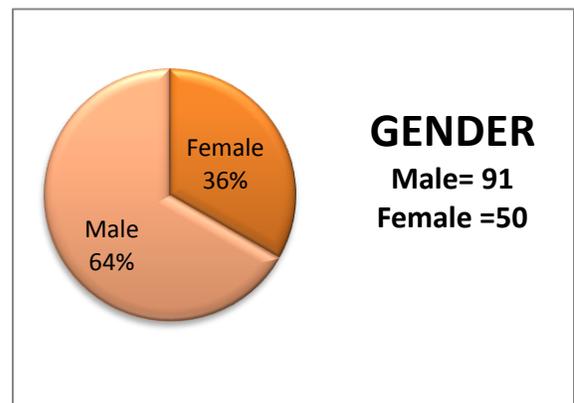
Cross-tabulations and frequency analyses were conducted on Age, Gender, Strategy Groups, designated first priority Need, Risk Level, and Event. Age of offenders varied from 19-64 with a range of 45, and was not correlated with risk level, gender or revocation.

Frequency distributions for Risk Level and Gender can be found in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively, Moderate assessed risk level occurred most often for a result of 61.7%. Male offenders made up the bulk of the offenders for a total of 64%. These are expected results that reflect what the criminal justice and sociological literature communicate.

**Table 2**

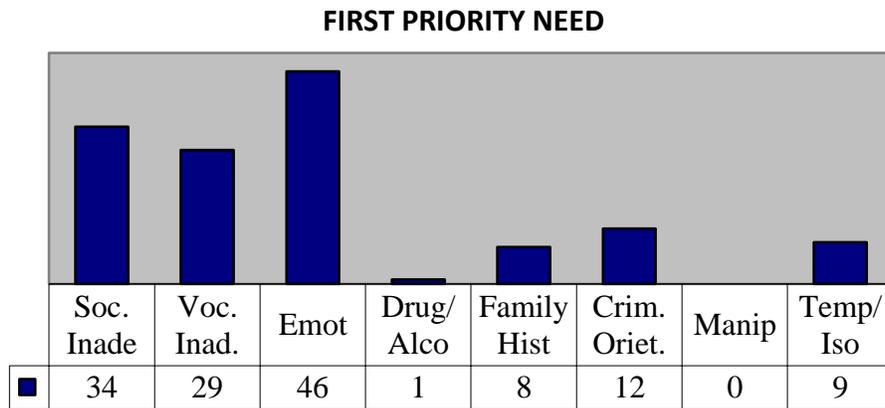


**Table 3**



The most frequently designated strategy group was Casework Control with 80 out of 141 offenders for a total of 56.74%. Frequency distributions revealed Emotional Need as the most often assigned first priority need designation 46 times. There were two cases where no need was assigned, and Manipulative Behavior was never assigned as a first need. Table 4 further illustrates the designation of the priority needs.

**Table 4**



The total rate of revocation for the sample of 141, as measured by the onset of the CAIS in September 2010 through January of 2012, was 18%. Table 5 (Appendix D) describes the rate of revocation for each of the variables Gender, Risk Level, and the five Strategy Groups.

Casework Control (CC) strategy group had the largest number of assigned offenders and highest rate of revocation. This strategy group also had designated priority need Emotional Need, 27 times and Social Inadequacy 24 times. These needs as allocated to Casework Control strategy group constitute over half the amount these need were designated throughout the entire sample of 141 offenders. The second largest number of offenders was assigned to Situation Intervention/Treatment (SI-T) with a total of 34. Vocational Inadequacy and Emotional Need were the most significant priority needs assigned to this strategy group with a total of 8 and 15 respectively. The three remaining strategy groups, Selective Intervention-Situational (SI-S), Environment Structure (ES), and Limit Setter (LS), had a total of 27 offenders assigned.

Strategy group SI-S offender priority needs were scattered amongst the assigned needs with no outstanding single priority need. For the ES strategy offenders, Vocational Inadequacy had three and Social Inadequacy had five designated priority needs. Lastly, LS strategy offenders were assigned the first priority need Criminal Orientation three times, Vocational Inadequacy four times, and Emotional Need three times. This was the only strategy group never assigned Social Inadequacy as a designated priority need.

### **Qualitative Findings—Probation/Parole Officers**

The CAIS tool is more comprehensive than the DOC's 2<sup>nd</sup> generation traditional tool as each generation of tool builds on the prior generation. Montana DOC found a reduction in recidivism, as measured by rates of revocation, for the population of offenders assessed by the CAIS (Johnson 2012). When the specialized officers were asked if they thought it correctly identified risk level, five of the seven officers replied "yes". One officer said "Yes, fairly consistently" and another officer said "It catches things like embezzlement and forgery and gives broad and specific enough classification."

This same question was asked of the traditional officers concerning their assessment tool. All seven of the officers emphatically said "NO!" Interviews with traditional officers were generally 30 minutes longer than with specialized officers, because traditional officers had much to say concerning the inadequacy of their assessment tool. The following represents the main problems they had with the assessment tool but is not a comprehensive list.

"...an offender that stole an item worth less than \$100 will assess out the same as an offender who stabbed someone 31 times."

“...we override this system all time. Everyone does. Then we have to let our supervisor know, and it is a huge waste of time.”

“We have such a large caseload that we do not have the time for fieldwork.”

“...it combines too many items in one group. Not every person has the same issues.”

These examples delineate the inconsistency of the assessments, lack of effectiveness of the assessment tool, and absence of EBP in the traditional tool.

Prime concerns of traditional officers were the size of their caseload and amount of time to supervise offenders. These two issues arose several times throughout all the traditional officer interviews. Average caseloads for traditional officers ranged from 75-80 offenders. Specialized officer's caseloads were a maximum of 40. Smaller caseloads were mandated for the specialized program. Smaller caseloads gave the specialized officers the time and opportunity to conduct the extended interview process that assesses the offender's risks and needs and more effectively supervise the offender.

Offender interviews conducted utilizing the CAIS were considerably longer than the traditional assessment interviews. Six of the seven specialized officers saw the advantages of the lengthy interviews.

“...sometimes the offender gets impatient but we get more in depth knowledge that we normally do not get.”

“The interview is long but we get to know the offender more in-depth.”

“...questions involved in the interview take a long time. They open more channels for more communication.”

“Motivational interviews we learned in training takes time...a better way of understanding the offender.”

“Opens up underlying issues...so the time is worth it.”

“It is time consuming, offenders get irritated...”

This suggests that despite the length of time the assessment interview takes, the quality and quantity of information retrieved benefits the officers in their supervision of the offenders. Specialized officers remarked several times that during these interviews not only did they obtain important information that cannot be observed; they also gained rapport with the offender. Rapport, as the officers characterized it, included an element of trust.

“Increased rapport with offenders...we learn intimate details...”

“Better relationships, the offender feels that I really understand them.”

“Interviews get really detailed...great way to build rapport.”

“...good way to build rapport and get to know the offender.”

“...offenders need to buy into the program, if I have rapport it helps.”

It is especially noteworthy to consider how frequently rapport was stated by the specialized officers. None of the officer interview questions specifically alluded to rapport. As a prompt question, officers were asked what it was about rapport that they felt was important. The officers remarked about how it affected their relationships with the offenders they supervise.

“...they know they can tell me stuff and not get in trouble if they are honest about it.”

“...sometimes they just call to tell me about their day.”

“...there are a few that just drop by and say hi.”

“...they call me when they are going into crisis, they know I will help.”

Rapport is initially fashioned during the interview process. The MI techniques deliberately adapted for the interview process appear to result in rapport building. In addition to the MI techniques for the delivery element of the interview, the questions also appear to engender receptive relationships. The interview process component of the CAIS shifts the focus of risks onto a focus of relational needs of the offender. Offenders are no longer lost in an invisible system but can now approach a forced relationship that they can view as positive rather than antagonistic. Thus, rapport is an important element in the offender-officer exchange that contributes to successful completion of probation. The CAIS training the specialized officers received included interviewing techniques that focused on eliciting information in order to get to know the whole offender. Essentially this provided a more complete view of the offender's risks, needs and potential areas of crisis for pro-active interventions.

Interviews with the traditional officers offered no indication of rapport building as a necessary component for the interview or the assessment and supervision. Perhaps traditional officers did not see rapport as feasible within their allotted interview time. Responses included:

“The offenders either buy into the program or they don't.”

“...the offender either cares about it or he doesn't.”

“...DUI offenders are generally in denial of doing anything wrong- can't always get them to understand...”

“...there is a balance but first I have to be concerned with public safety.”

Traditional officer's caseloads are double those of the specialized officers. Traditional officers have a significantly shorter amount of time for interviewing, may share office space, and do not have the opportunity to use advanced interviewing techniques. The short interview process does not incorporate EBP and is done in a setting that inhibits potential rapport building and accurate risk assessment. The traditional risk assessment tool does not consider the environment of the offenders at the time of the offense. It accounts for the static factor of history and assesses risk at that level. Lacking an effective needs domain limits this assessment tool and places the traditional officer at a disadvantage to offset potential risks of re-offense. Inclusion of needs assessment can encourage alternatives to criminal behaviors for offenders.

Needs of the offender are a primary domain in the CAIS assessment tool. Specialized officers expressed how important this was to their supervision:

“... the needs helps me to identify triggers and can prevent crisis.”

“...referrals are given for the needs....I can be more proactive and less reactive.”

“...it [CAIS] separates the struggles, issues, and problems. That we can address things better”

“Identifying the needs...can lead to more support systems, very important. Offenders respond better with this”

Offender needs are determined and displayed in the assessment output of the case plans after the interview and all data has been placed in the system. As developed by the CAIS, case plans also include flexible goals for offenders that are twofold. First, goals are established to fulfill court orders and identified needs. Second, offenders are asked what they would like to accomplish for themselves in years to come. Recreational goals might include a wide variety of

things such as knitting classes, having a house with a back yard, and different educational pursuits. The case plans integrate the goals into the case management. This can simplify a multi-tiered set of needs of the offender and address the needs through a step-by-step process for coordination by the specialized officers. There were mixed reviews concerning the benefits of the CAIS case plan component.

“...case plans help walk through the different goals that are going to be done.”

“...it gives them small steps so they don't get overwhelmed.”

“...case plans sometimes picks up on the alcohol problems on the reservation.”

“...it was stuff I was already doing.”

“...it enhanced what I was already doing.”

“Don't like the case plan, very time consuming.”

Generally, specialized officers did not specifically address what they appreciated about the case plan component. They reflected on what it did for the offenders, why some did not like it, and how it was somewhat redundant to what they were already doing. There were two exceptions. Two officers specifically mentioned how the offenders reacted to the goal setting aspects of the case plan.

“It was eye opening to me the high number of offenders said they never really thought about their future much. It was hard for them to see the future when the present was so constricting, like not being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

“...goal setting really was remarkable. I had offenders really trying to learn new things for future plans and recreational purposes.”

Goal setting was mentioned as a positive contribution by the other officers despite its association with the case planning component of the assessment. Aside from the goal setting aspect, responses to the case plan suggest that while case plans are necessary, the CAIS case plan was not time efficient and did not significantly contribute to the offender's supervision. The specialized officers were already including case plans in their everyday supervision of offenders.

Offender supervision is costly and time consuming. Officers are continually dealing with multiple offenders. Effective supervision requires careful time management, and the amount of time spent with an offender can significantly influence success. Time spent on superfluous tasks impedes the officer's abilities to supervise adequately. Case plans are relevant and necessary for offender supervision. However, the CAIS case plan seems to represent a redundant use of experienced officer's time.

Traditional officers were vehement about their lack of time to engage in offender supervision and intervention practices. Large caseloads, significant data entry requirements, and limited assessment tools inhibited their capacity to identify and respond to potential crises before they occur. All seven traditional officers perceived part of their jobs as "babysitters" and "band-aids" attaching these phrases to their concerns regarding the limited time they have to meet their responsibilities and potentially interrupt re-offense.

Time is an important part of supervision, necessary to fulfill the requirements of being a successful probation/parole officer. It takes time to do interviews, assessments, crisis intervention and day-to-day fieldwork supervision. When asked if they had sufficient time to spend with the offender, the specialized officers reported:

“Yes, I have enough time. Because of the caseloads, any more than 40 it would be impossible.”

“Yes, it helps me focus more, so I can sit down with the offender and try other avenues during a crisis.”

“...lower caseloads helped the time and reduced the revocation. The lower revocations reduce the paperwork.”

“...on average I have enough time, with the lower case loads, yea.”

“Yes, but varies around Christmas time, sometimes one offender takes all day.”

“...generally yes, I need it for building relationships, it is important with communities and the offenders.”

“Most days yes, it helps if I have rapport...”

Overall, specialized officers agreed they had enough time. Time however, was an important element that enabled all aspects of the program to be productive. Smaller caseloads were identified as the major reason for having enough time. Having more time allowed for in-depth assessment and potential crisis intervention to assist in lowering recidivism. Rapport built during the assessment interview met some relational needs for the offender and created a support system that could guide the offender into pro-social non-criminal attitudes and actions. These pro-social non-criminal attitudes and actions encouraged lower recidivism rates. Time therefore was necessary to create the positive correlations to lower rates of revocation.

When specialized officers were asked what they thought would make the program better, the responses focused on the previous mentioned concerns, positive perceptions training needs, and team coordination.

“Too much paperwork, need more time for fieldwork.”

“The assessment is good, but the case plan is not. PO knows what they are doing and what to do next.”

“...CAIS has been a success, but we need more meetings with other CAIS officers to get ideas.”

“More training, more opportunity to know what is going with the team.”

“More training with these kinds of things and mental health issues and yes we need more time to prevent emergencies.” “...we need a wrap-around system to change the environment as well.”

“The assessment is a waste of time after the first six months. It is useful to build rapport, but time consuming and becomes more work...”

“...more time to assess, too much data entry, need the officer to have individual time with the offender to facilitate case management and crisis intervention.”

The diversity of the replies suggests that different officers implement the CAIS somewhat differently. Long-term feasibility is also a concern as the officers expressed discontent with some aspects of the CAIS after utilizing it for a significant duration of time. This may also be indicative of officer’s ambivalence toward the tool as compared to relying more on their years of experience working with offenders. Specialized officers’ desire for more training can represent a lack of full understanding of the tool and its use. Specialized officers generally acknowledged that they utilized about 75-80% of the CAIS’ capabilities. All officers agreed that developing rapport contributed significantly to effective offender’s assessment, supervision, and outcome.

## Qualitative Findings—Offenders

Rapport was also meaningful to the offenders. When asked what they liked about the program, two aspects were consistently mentioned. First, they appreciated their probation officer. Offenders remarked:

“... my probation officer is very real. I cannot just say I am fine, we discuss how I am doing. When I needed help with my child’s school, my probation officer stepped-up.”

“I spend the whole time [with the probation officer] talking about my feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, you know.”

“I have my probation officers cell. My probation officer is concerned about me, not like some other probation officers who are just doing their job. I leave here laughing.”

“...my probation officer has been more like a friend. I don’t feel uncomfortable, or shamed. I can call if I need to. You know you get that social stigma.”

Probations officers’ participation with the offenders in their rehabilitation was foremost on the offenders’ minds, when they reflected on what they liked about the CAIS program.

Without specifically mentioning rapport, the offenders described the importance of the relationship they had with their probation officer. The second aspect mentioned concerned the classes the offenders attended while on the program. These classes were assigned based on the needs part of the CAIS. Offenders expressed how the classes helped them change their behaviors.

“...the class helped me understand my behaviors and my thoughts behind the behaviors. I respond to things differently now.”

“The classes helped, I think things through a lot more.”

“The DBT (Dialectical Behavioral Treatment) is wonderful. It helped my life skills.”

“...AA helped, but the classes I took on thinking really hit the mark.”

When asked what the offenders did not like about the program, there were no negative responses.

“There is not necessarily anything wrong with the program. People on probation, if they did what they did then they have to know they pay the price. I am accountable. There are lots of people on probation that think they are being mistreated, they just don’t get it.”

“I just really like the program. I use to be a nail bitter. Now I don’t. I am just very proud of myself and want to invest my time in giving people the support that was given to me.”

“Oh, I don’t know. My probation officer was just not a cop; they [cops] just don’t care how you feel. If you are doing the right thing, they [probation officer] really just help you out.”

“Well, I just did not like what they busted me for. I had done a lot worse and was trying to do better when I got busted. I guess I was already trying to do better. My probation officer just reminded about how far I have come. That was encouraging.”

Rapport and attention to the needs of the offender made significant contributions to the willingness of the offender to change their behaviors. The probation officers were viewed as counselors and friends that primarily acted as support for the offender rather than authoritative punishers. However, it should be noted that each offender did express that they knew they had limitations and what was expected of them. Offender supervision with the CAIS program was

not simply a counseling session. It was a carefully coordinated method that offered the offender support, structure and consequences, simultaneously.

Attention to more concerns of the offender seemed to work well. All four of the offenders were feeling positive and doing well on their probation. Although this is a limited sample, the offenders were consistent in their support of CAIS and in their positive attitudes towards the program, and especially to the frontline probation officers who were the backbone of the program.

## **DISCUSSION**

The review of the literature demonstrates the breadth of research that has been conducted on risk assessment systems. Theoretical perspectives and empirically-based intervention techniques have been refined and incorporated into the CAIS assessment tool along with an actuarial approach to risk prediction. This research conducted on the CAIS risk/need assessment discovered three important themes as perceived by experienced probation/parole officers. The importance of time, caseload, and rapport emerged throughout the interviews and represented the most frequently mentioned issues. Rapport, as repeatedly stated by the specialized officers, was a substantial element in their supervision and subsequent interventions that prevented revocations.

Specialized officers also reported that understanding the needs of the offender made a significant contribution to the success of the offender. These statements from the officers suggested that the interventions were effective in mitigating circumstances that would lead to

revocation. The offender's interviews reinforced this point, as each offender remarked on how their positive interactions with their probation officer helped with their probation.

The lower rates of revocation, positive reviews of the specialized officers, and statements by the offenders are all compelling indications of successful assessments by the CAIS tool. There were many different aspects of the CAIS risk/needs assessment tool that contributed to lower revocation rates. Lower revocation rates did not appear to be influenced by a single factor, but rather by a combination of factors. Time, caseload, rapport, goal setting, and MI training all contributed by way of a composite approach.

The specialized program mandated smaller caseloads. Reduced caseloads increased the time officers spent with offenders, affording more supportive structures. Smaller caseloads were necessary for the lengthy interview processes, consistent follow-up on needs referrals, and potential crisis interventions. Thus, fewer cases gave the officers more constructive individualized time with each offender and enabled the officer to be proactive in prevention rather than reactive in revocation.

Time is noted as a central element in this process. Both the traditional and specialized officers consistently remarked on its critical importance. Traditional officers valued time for more fieldwork. Fieldwork enabled the officer's supervision of offenders, as their presence acted as a deterrent for future re-offense, and promoted public safety. Specialized officers considered time as a crucial element in being proactive and preventative to enable the offender to be successful.

Furthermore, specialized officers considered time spent with the offender as necessary for building rapport. Rapport has long been established as an important element in any interview process (Collins and Lincoln 2005; Vallano and Compo 2011). Since every officer remarked on the importance of rapport, this suggests that rapport development contributed significantly to the relationships, processes and ultimately greater potentials of successful completion in probation/parole programs.

CAIS assessment questions delivered through MI techniques provided officers the ability and opportunity to develop rapport with offenders, as is the intention of this technique. Interview questions provoked thought, obtained external and contextual information, and facilitated the creation of individualized case plans for each offender. This was not a matter of simply asking questions; offenders were unfolding meaning of their actions and patterns of behavior through their narratives. Narratives, in this respect, acted as an intermediary that generated a connection between offender and officer. This provided an extended understanding and estimation of the offenders thought processes, needs the contributed to criminal behavior and various social, educational, and vocational desires.

These desires then became potential goals for the offender to commit to, and for the officer to establish a positive reinforcement rather than a strict supervisory punitive environment. Goal setting incorporated the potential desires of the offender and the conditions of the offender's probation. It was a step-by-step process for the offender. What the specialized officers called "baby steps" were used so that offenders would not feel inundated and overwhelmed from all the activities and conditions set forth by their probation/parole mandates.

Goals included employment and rehabilitative concerns but also considered potential educational and recreational aspirations. Probation officer encouragement toward the offender in attaining goals produced a dual effect. First, completion of a goal came with the acknowledgement from an authority figure which reinforces the positive activity. Second, it could promote a less constricting atmosphere as the offender can realize a potentially productive future outside of their current confining reality of being on probation/parole.

According to the officers, goals that are set during the interview process were very important to the offenders. This account comes with one qualifying statement. The specialized officers were unanimous in their concern that goals set were “realistic” goals. This suggests that the officers would not allow the offender to set a goal that was not, in their trained opinion, realistic. Lack of attainment of goals has negative repercussions that can put an individual into a state of anxiety and depression, completely reversing the intention of goal setting. Hence, construction of realistic goals and baby steps towards these goals was a deliberate process to diminish the potential downside of goal setting. Research on the importance of goal setting for offender populations is sparse; however there is evidence for its usefulness in deterring crime.

A study done by Lee, Uken and Sebold (2007) suggested that goal setting for domestic violence offenders produced a 58% reduction in domestic violence recidivism. Setting goals can produce a twofold effect in the criminological focus. First, goals can direct attention and activity towards desirable behavior and away from undesirable behavior. This suggestion conforms to the Force-Field approach used in this assessment instrument. Second, setting goals can also help to assess the offender’s progress, as completion of a goal(s) is a positive orientation towards legal behaviors.

In order to successfully implement the comprehensive approach of the CAIS, officers received six weeks of concentrated training. This particular training instructed specialized officers in effective use of the instrument, enhanced motivational interviewing skills, and implementing the recommended approaches to supervision and intervention. All of these skills worked in concert to reduce recidivism.

The qualitative analysis of the CAIS approach demonstrated that the combination of smaller caseloads, more time, better rapport and established goals increased the effectiveness of this approach. Support given to the offenders by the probation officers, as perceived by the offenders, contributed greatly to success of the offenders. Again, individually these factors would not necessarily produce lower revocation rates.

Quantitative analysis of this research data showed that normally strong predictors of recidivism were not present in this study. This is an expected result due to the CAIS' deliberate focus on interventions and rapport which can moderate revocation and recidivism and is corroborative of the qualitative analysis.

The majority of the assessed offenders fell into the CC strategy group which is defined by lifestyle instability with several on-going crises. Within this group priority needs, Emotional Need and Social Inadequacy were the most often designated need. The second most assigned strategy group was SI-T with the most occurring designated priority needs, Emotional Need, and Vocational Inadequacy. The assigned priority needs, Social Inadequacy and Emotional Need, followed closely by Vocational Inadequacy, dominated the needs aspect of the CAIS assessment.

Recognizing the predominate CC strategy group in conjunction with the most designated needs as the most likely candidates for revocation, requires an awareness of the targeted populations. Native American communities and co-occurring offenders located in rural areas of Montana. Generally, these communities have little or no access to medical facilities, drug treatment or mental health counseling. These areas also tend to be isolated with limited access to transportation services and regular employment. These circumstances create an environment that lacks any supportive foundations.

Additionally, all of the above concerns inhibit social integration, financial stability, pro-social activities and foster disenfranchisement. Deficiencies in these factors demonstrate the importance of the assigned priority needs and clarify the lack of strong age and risk level influences on recidivism. There are significant cultural differences between Native American communities and surrounding communities. Co-occurring populations have been noted to be a subset of offenders that respond better to specially designed, integrated treatment programs such as Modified Therapeutic Communities (Chandler, Fletcher and Volkow 2009).

Co-occurring offenders do not respond well to the generalized approaches in risk assessment and correctional treatment. Native American and co-occurring population needs are often complicated by political rhetoric, policy concerns, and social and budgetary barriers. The historic trauma experienced by Native American peoples is rarely acknowledged in rehabilitation programs. This also represents a barrier that is demonstrative of American cultural attitudes towards drugs, racism, and lower economic status. One-on-one interaction that promotes interest in the well-being of the offender is just simply more likely to have better results with populations that are impacted by cultural differences, financial difficulties and unacknowledged trauma that

can provoke emotional responses and foment instability. These particular facets deprive individuals of supportive environments for pro-social thoughts and behaviors. Individualized interaction that develops rapport is a central part of the CAIS tool that promotes positive interaction which can help provide the emotional stability that is not reflected in the traditional probation assessments and programs.

As the final rate of revocation for the entirety of the targeted populations from September of 2010 to May of 2012, was just over 16% (Johnson 2012), it can be determined both quantitatively and qualitatively, that the CAIS delivered results and was effective in reducing revocations.

Future research examining rapport in the context of cultural differences could prove to be efficacious. This could further refine current practices. Further, *very* few studies examined Native American culture response to crime as compared to the American justice institution's response to crime, and how these differences present barriers to deterrence, constructive intervention and rehabilitation. More research into this concern could produce more reliable and accurate risk/needs assessment instruments for many different populations.

Financial barriers have not been discussed in this research, and are of paramount consideration within the American economy. The CAIS has been discontinued due to the cost of the instrument and the overall time necessary to attend to the offenders needs. Time includes the need for more probation officers and the various programs that address substance abuse and emotional concerns. Time is money and is an issue with the organization and predominate mindset of the American culture towards crime and is not addressed in this research.

Given the narrow focus of this research, there are some significant limitations. The results may not be generalizable to probation programs outside the State of Montana and its programs for several reasons. The CAIS used for the grant-funded specialized programs was “Montana-ized” for legal and cultural considerations and the officers and offenders interviewed were subject to Montana DOC policies. Record keeping techniques and policies at the DOC are undergoing change and some data for statistical analysis was not available.

It should also be noted that actuarial approaches rate individual histories and recommend the most likely group membership based on empirical and theoretical research. They cannot and do not claim to capture all the nuances of offender history and specific criminal etiologies. That would be an impossible task.

This research may have policy implications for the Montana DOC and can be used to improve other intervention and rehabilitation programs. Findings of rapport and effective interventions may promote changes in Montana DOC’s approach towards supervising offenders.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The expense of the CAIS has made continued utilization of this risk assessment instrument unfeasible at this time. Further, as the DOC has purchased a new risk/assessment instrument created by E. Latessa, which has proven to be effective in reducing recidivism, recommendation considerations are limited to mostly organizational concerns. They are as follows:

1. More coordination between officers to compare notes and organize team orientations for focused supervision and possible organizational improvements as seen through the frontline officers.
2. Motivational Interviewing training for all probation officers and staff members who interview offenders can produce more effective assessments and build rapport that can be more efficacious at producing lower rates of revocation.
3. Streamlining the number of computer programs that probation officers input data concerning the offenders, as this limits the probation officers time to engage in fieldwork and crisis interventions that can potentially lead to lower rates of revocation.
4. As Native Americans have the highest rates of revocation, further research into possible techniques that can engage and increase Native American responsibility.

Obvious recommendations would include increasing the number of probation officers, more access to mental health facilities, educational funds, and medical professionals. As these issues are already known to the DOC and include budgetary concerns that are not a focus of this

research project, they are mentioned simply as a basic element in any research focusing on offender recidivism.

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## APPENDIX A

### Specialized officer interview questions:

- 1) Do you think the CAIS correctly assesses offenders?
- 2) What aspects of the program do you see as encouraging the reduction in recidivism?
  - a. *Examples would be: case load, time spent, and actuarial assessment.*
- 3) To what extent have you been able to implement the program?
- 4) How does the specialized program differ from the traditional probation programs?
- 5) Do you feel you have sufficient time to spend with each offender?
- 6) What information do you cover when spending time with the offender?
- 7) Are there individual characteristics of offenders that are not included in the assessment?
- 8) What types of offenders have you worked with in the programs that have proved most or least successful?
- 9) How long have you been assessing offenders and acting as a P.O.?
- 10) Who decides the ultimate classification?
- 11) Any changes you think would improve the probation program and assessment?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Tradition officers interview questions:**

- 1) What do you think of the current risk assessment tool you are using?
- 2) Does this tool adequately help you manage your clients?
- 3) Why or why not?
- 4) What information do you cover when spending time with the offender?
- 5) Are there individual characteristics of offenders or items of assessment that you think should be included in the assessment?
- 6) What personality traits of offenders have you worked with in the programs that have proved most or least successful?
- 7) How long have you been assessing offenders and acting as a P.O.?
- 8) Who decides the ultimate classification?
- 9) Any changes you think would improve the probation program and assessment?

## APPENDIX C

### Offender interview questions:

- 1) How are you doing on probation?
  - a. *How has it helped? Or not?*
- 2) What did you like about the probation program?
- 3) What aspects of the probation do you dislike?
- 4) How effective do you communicate with your P.O.? Do you and your P.O. understand each other?
  - a. *Is your P.O. easily accessible?*
  - b. *What do you think about the amount of time you spend with your P.O.?*
- 5) What has changed in your life since you have been on probation?
  - a. *Are there differences in your environment or employment?*
- 6) What has happened during your time on probation?
  - a. *Have you engaged in any different recreational activities?*
- 7) What are your plans after probation?

## APPENDIX D

**Table 5**

N=141	Number of Cases	# Revoked	Revocation Rate
Female	50	7	14%
Male	91	19	20.9%
Low Risk	32	4	12.5%
Moderate Risk	87	19	21.8%
High Risk	22	3	13.6%
SI-T	34	4	11.8%
SI-S	7	0	00.0%
CC	80	19	23.8%
ES	9	2	22.2%
LS	11	1	9.1%