

Reparative versus Standard Probation: Community Justice Outcomes

John A. Humphrey
University of New Hampshire

Gale Burford
University of Vermont

Meredith P. Huey
University of Georgia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation is to assess the relative merits of reparative versus standard probation for the reduction in criminal re-offending. Data provided by the Vermont Department of Corrections, which included information from all fourteen Vermont District Courts, formed the basis for the analysis. All court convictions (n=34,471 dockets) for misdemeanor charges sentenced and remanded to the Vermont Department of Corrections for probation supervision for the years 1998-2005 were initially analyzed. To examine differential outcomes of standard versus reparative probation over a five-year period, the analysis utilizes complete data for 9,078 offenders sentenced for misdemeanor crimes to either standard or reparative probation during the years 1998-2000. This cohort of probationers was tracked for five years from the point of placement on probation to determine the probability of a new conviction either during or following the probationary period.

The findings show that:

- Age, gender, prior record, current offense (property and other misdemeanor violations), and length of probationary period are significantly related to recidivism.
- Being placed on reparative versus standard probation significantly decreases the likelihood of a new conviction both while on probation and after the completion of a probationary sentence. More specifically, being placed on reparative probation versus standard probation decreases the odds of a new conviction during probation (relative to no new conviction) by 23%.
- The odds of a new conviction after probation (relative to no new conviction) are reduced by 12% for reparative versus standard probationers.
- Reparative probationers (compared to standard probationers) are significantly less likely to commit a new offense while on probation and during the five-year period following the imposition of the original probationary sentence holding constant the effects of the probationer's age, gender, prior record, type of offense (property, drug, motor vehicle and other), and length of probationary period.
- That is, probationers who are younger, male, property offenders, recidivists, and those serving longer probationary sentences are significantly more likely to commit a new offense while on probation and following the end of their probation period. However, offenders with these risk factors who are placed on reparative versus standard probation are significantly less likely either to commit a new offense while on probation or during the five year period following the imposition of the original probationary sentence.