

St. Louis County Public Safety Innovation Fund Report

COMMUNITY SANCTIONS PROGRAM

Program Goal: Provide alternative community sanctions in lieu of incarceration for offenders who have violated their conditions of probation.

Expected Benefits of the Program:

1. Reduce the number of people in custody at the St. Louis County Jail.
2. Expedite the violation process to include a reduction of paperwork and the Court's involvement in technical and non-serious probation violations.
3. Reduce recidivism and implement evidence-based practices.

Results through the first nine months of the program (July 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014):

1. Reduce the number of people in custody at the St. Louis County Jail and NERCC.

The Community Sanctions Program (CSP) served 83 offenders during the nine-month period, 48 in Northern St. Louis County and 35 in Duluth. (The Community Sanctions Program in Duluth did not begin until late August due to staffing delays.) As of March 31, ten offenders had completed the CSP including:

- Five who successfully completed the program (all from Northern St. Louis County)
- Five who failed to complete the program (four from Duluth and one from Virginia). One committed another offense and was arrested. Four were arrested on warrants for failing to keep in contact with their CSP probation officer, using drugs or alcohol and/or committing a new offense. All were subsequently sentenced to NERCC.

73 offenders remain in the Community Sanctions Program. Of the 73, seven started on the program before July 1, 2013 when it was the Range Alternative Sanctions Program.

Five offenders were interviewed, but declined to participate in the program because they were unwilling to accept the program's conditions.

The use of jail beds for sentenced offenders decreased during the nine-month period. In July 2013, the monthly average of sentenced offenders was 46.3. By March 2014, the number had dropped to 34.8, a 25% decrease. The average monthly count of offenders who were "housed out" dropped from 54.3 in July 2013 to 22.3 in March 2014, a 59% decrease. These numbers may overstate the impact of the CSP, however, since only about one-quarter of jail inmates are incarcerated for probation violations (and even fewer for the "technical" violations addressed by the Community Sanctions Program).

The 83 program participants spent a total of 12,397 days on the program during the nine-month period.

Actual Program Costs between July 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014:

Community Sanctions Program (1.0 FTE)	Expenditure	Explanation
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 43,365.27*	1.0 FTE*
Communication and Transportation	\$ 5,661.20	
Equipment	\$ 2,564.40	Laptops, vests, breathalyzers
TOTAL CSP COSTS FOR NINE MONTHS	\$ 51,590.87	

*The program salary costs do not include a full-time CSP probation officer position in Northern St. Louis County. In 2012, the probation department re-allocated existing personnel to staff a new “Range Alternative Sanctions Program (RASP)”. The RASP/CSP position is now part of the regular budget.

It is difficult to calculate the program’s jail savings because participants generally spend more time on the Community Sanctions Program than they would in jail for their violations of probation. Therefore, the entire 12,397 days cannot be counted as jail savings. One way of calculating the jail savings is to assume an average of 60 days of jail time for a violation of probation. The 83 participants, then, would have served 4,980 days in jail (83 participants X 60 days). At the current per diem of \$117.09, this would have cost \$583,108.20.

\$ 583,108.20 (4,980 days of jail care @ \$117.09/day)
\$ - 51,590.87 (Actual expenditures for CSP)
\$ 531,517.33 IN JAIL SAVINGS

2. Expedite the violation process to include a reduction of paperwork and the Court’s involvement in technical and non-serious probation violations.

The majority of offenders were referred to the program with a “pending” violation of probation. Only a few participants were released from jail custody to the Community Sanctions Program. If the offender had not participated in the CSP, however, they would have been sentenced to jail or NERCC for the violation of probation.

Traditional probation officers referred potential candidates with a pending violation to the CSP probation officer. The CSP probation officer conducted an “Offender Sanctioning Conference” with the offender, explaining the process, client rights, proposed community sanction and the rationale for the sanction. If approved by the CSP supervisor, the “Notice of Probation Violation and Sanctions Conference Report” was submitted to the judge for their consideration and action. (All were approved.) The process does not require a hearing before the judge, thus saving court time and paperwork. It also allowed for quicker action on probation violations. (Important since during the same time period, traditional probation officers filed nearly 500 technical/special condition violations of probation.)

During the second half of 2014, the CSP probation officers will more aggressively identify jail inmates who could be released onto the CSP. They will likely accept fewer “high need” clients from traditional probation officers in favor of probationers who have been incarcerated for technical violations of probation. They will also begin to transition longer-term clients back to traditional probation caseloads, freeing more openings for incarcerated offenders.

3. Reduce recidivism and implement evidence-based practices.

It is too early to assess recidivism rates among CSP participants. However, nearly all the CSP participants were assessed at a medium to high risk of re-offending, as measured by their LS/CMI or other assessment score. Evidence-based practices indicate services should be targeted toward medium and high-risk offenders, and address their criminogenic needs. The “Sanctions Conference Report” outlines the criminogenic needs area(s) to be addressed by the community sanctions.

80+% of the CSP clients had substance abuse issues. Most had been through chemical dependency treatment at least once. In Northern St. Louis County, more participants used alcohol and marijuana while in Duluth more clients were using heroin and/or synthetic drugs. Many had co-occurring mental health issues that also had to be addressed. Nearly one-quarter of the clients spent at least some of their CSP time in chemical dependency treatment. The CSP probation officers were able to work closely with treatment staff to coordinate community aftercare services.

The CSP staff also connected participants with mental health assessments and treatment, re-entry programming such as job skills and education, Sentence to Serve/Community Service Work, AA/NA meetings, anger management groups, restorative justice circles, and domestic abuse programming. During their time on CSP, several clients also were in Drug and/or DWI court, and Mental Health Court. The CSP probation officers supervised the participants closely using curfews, house arrest, random drug testing, Day Reporting Centers, phone calls, and office and home visits. Electronic monitoring was not available for CSP participants (it was not included in the original budget request), but CSP probation officers believe it would be a useful tool, especially for participants in the initial month(s) of the program.

All of the participants were required to attend cognitive-behavioral skills programming. The Northern St. Louis County CSP probation officer co-facilitated the “Cog Skills” groups. Evidence-based practice has shown cognitive-behavioral programs are the most effective form of programming for most medium and high-risk offenders; it encourages long-term change in offenders, thereby reducing their risk of recidivism. Unfortunately, the “Cog Skills” groups -- especially those in Duluth --were full so not every CSP client could participate. ARC is training additional Cognitive-Behavioral program facilitators to alleviate the problem.

The Community Sanction Program allowed offenders an opportunity to remain in the community and address their needs. The initial estimate of a six-month stay in the program may have been optimistic. CSP probation officers are finding their clients have a myriad of problems that require far more time and supervision than originally expected.

Demographic data is not yet available on program participants due to the small number of clients discharged from the program.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THE COMMUNITY SANCTIONS PROGRAM – BY EXPECTED BENEFIT:

1. *Reduce the number of people in custody at the St. Louis County Jail.* The Community Sanctions Program (CSP) served 83 offenders during the nine-month period. The use of jail beds for sentenced

offenders and number of defendants “housed out” decreased during the nine-month period. (It is difficult to correlate the jail bed decrease with the CSP because less than one-quarter of jail inmates are incarcerated for violations of probation and most of the CSP clients were referred to the program in lieu of incarceration). That said, the program may have saved an estimated \$500,000 in jail stays during the nine-month period.

2. *Expedite the violation process to include a reduction of paperwork and the Court’s involvement in technical and non-serious probation violations.* The Offender Sanctioning Process is a streamlined process that does not require a warrant and hearing before the judge, thus saving court time and paperwork. A copy of the “Notice of Probation Violation and Sanctions Conference Report” is submitted to the judge for their consideration and action. In all cases, the Judge approved the sanctions agreement. The process also allows for quicker action on probation violations.
3. *Reduce recidivism and implement evidence-based practices.* It is too early to assess recidivism rates among CSP participants, with only ten clients having completed the program. The program is adhering to evidence based practices by: (1) targeting medium and high-risk offenders as identified by an empirically-based risk assessment tool (2) matching offenders programming and services to their assessed criminogenic needs, (3) providing a balance of treatment and monitoring/sanctions, and (4) providing cognitive-behavioral programming for program participants.

Other Impacts of the Program, as Described in CSP Discharge Summaries:

“CSP allowed the offender the opportunity to be a part of his family’s life while in the program. It allowed the offender to successfully complete treatment and mental health care in a community. The offender claims that this opportunity has changed his life for the better and has allowed him to grow as a person and productive member of our society. He was given the opportunity to be a father, boyfriend and son. Without this program, he would have likely served time at NERCC / Jail which would have been at our expense and with no solid safety net to support him outside the institution. CSP has given him the tools to make it with a pro-social life style and chemically clean future that will only get better with time.”

“The defendant was able to maintain employment while living in the community. The defendant was able to complete treatment and cognitive skills programming while in the community and appears to have gotten a lot of support and information from that program. The last meeting we had was very positive and makes me feel like this man has a good prognosis for the future. He is currently living with his family and would likely have been divorced and without housing had he not been able to participate in this program. If anyone got anything from this opportunity, it was he and his family. It is nice to see the successful side of probation.”

“This defendant could have easily served out his sentence on any one of his violations. Through the persistence of all agents involved in this case, we were able to get this defendant treated, both chemically and mentally. The defendant also completed an anger control class that will hopefully benefit him through life. The defendant had a set of twins delivered while he was out of jail and likely would have missed that opportunity had it not been for this program. He and his wife have a home and she is gainfully employed while he watches the kids. None of the above would have occurred had he not been offered this program. The defendant would have likely served the whole sentence. The defendant was given his last UA and smiled the whole way as it was a clean UA that allowed me the opportunity to successfully discharge this man from probation and my program.”

“The defendant was able to maintain employment and be in the community for his kids. He also was able to work enough to obtain suitable housing that supported his positive life change. The defendant benefitted greatly from cognitive skills and continued support groups. This man would have lost everything had it not been for this opportunity. We all know starting over is a hard thing to do.”