

## ☒ THE EFFECTS OF CONNECTICUT'S PROBATION TRANSITION PROGRAM ON REDUCING TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS

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### ☒ Abstract

A dramatic increase in Connecticut's prison population and concern over the number of probation technical violators being sentenced to prison led to the piloting of a specialized probation program targeting high risk offenders. The present study used a quasi-experimental design with a one-year study period to evaluate the Probation Transition Program's (PTP) effect on probation technical violations and new arrests. Findings indicate the program significantly decreased technical violations in the participation group while the rate of new arrests remained stable. An analysis of PTP participants who received a technical violation or were arrested found that male probationers with high LSI-R risk scores were most likely to receive technical violations and younger male probationers who were African-American, unmarried, with a high number of convictions and high LSI-R risk scores were most likely to be arrested during the one-year follow-up period.

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The increase in prison populations across the United States has led many states to assess its causes and develop strategies to slow it. One focus has been on reducing the number of people sent to prison for probation violations. Nationally, the number of offenders incarcerated for violating parole, probation, or other release conditions increased more than sevenfold from 1980–1998, from 17% to 35% of all prison admissions (Petersilia, 2003). An estimated 6% of state prisoners in 1991 were there for a technical violation of probation. From 1975 to 1991, the number of parole and other conditional release violators entering state prisons increased at twice the rate of prison growth in general (Cohen, 1995). While there are little data available to gain a clear indication of the percent of revocations due to technical violations as opposed to new offenses, this percent has been estimated to be as high as 80% (Gray, Fields, & Maxwell, 2001).

Connecticut's prison population increased 82% between 1992 and 2003 (Prison and Jail Overcrowding Commission, 2003). This increase was believed to be partially due to the high number of probation technical violations resulting in prison sentences. In fact, 25% of Connecticut inmates were probation violators, with the average sentence for probation violations increasing from 18 months in 1992 to 30 months in 2000 (Program Review and Investigations Committee, 2000). Since the early 1990s, Connecticut has followed the national trend by making probation requirements increasingly stringent (Taxman & Cherkos, 1995). Ironically, the expansion of probation requirements necessitated by the intent to develop alternatives to incarceration has had the unintended consequence of expanding the numbers of probationers and parolees going to jail or prison on violations.

In Connecticut, the sharp rise in the prison population led to several legislative funding initiatives aimed at decreasing the number of released inmates being sent back to prison for new arrests and technical violations. A significant amount of funding was earmarked for the development and implementation of specialized probation programs targeting technical violations. In response to the legislative funding, several probation organizational policies and two specialized probation programs were initiated. The organizational philosophy promoted addressing criminogenic needs and prosocial attitudes while relying less on control and supervision methods. One of the specialized programs was the Probation Transition Program (PTP). The goal of the PTP was to enhance probation officers' ability to successfully reintegrate released inmates back into their communities. The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the Probation Transition Program in regard to lowering the rate of technical violations. We begin with an overview of relevant literature on probation followed by a description of the Probation Transition Program.

## ☒ Review of Probation Literature

The guiding principles of Connecticut's Probation Transition Program focused on probationer needs rather than relying on control and supervision methods. Prior

research across the United States has consistently found that control-oriented probation practices that exclusively monitor behavior with rigid enforcement of conditions are more likely to increase recidivism while strategies focusing more on instilling prosocial attitudes and addressing criminogenic needs decrease recidivism. Many researchers have noted the futility in increasing the level of watchfulness or surveillance alone, and that surveillance without treatment will simply add to the number of technical violations with no added community safety benefit. The literature is clear on the limited utility in reducing recidivism with a deterrence-based, or “scared straight” type of approach as opposed to remediation directed toward criminogenic factors. In short, a motivational, rather than confrontational, approach is advised as a better means of recidivism reduction (Fulton, Stichman, Travis, & Latessa, 1997; Gendreau, 1996; MacKenzie, 1998; Petersilia, 2003; Taxman, 2002).

The addition of special conditions of probation ushered in by the movement toward intermediate sanctions is seen by various researchers to be connected to the increase in probation violations (Cromwell, Alarid, & del Carmen, 2005; Wagner & Baird, 1993). Almost all probationers under supervision (99%) in 1995 had one or more added conditions. Eighty-two percent of probationers were given three or more added conditions (Bonczar, 1997). The increase in the percent of cases with special conditions is evidenced at the federal level. In 1987, 67% of all federal probationers had special conditions in addition to the standard probation conditions. By 1996, this figure increased to 91% (Adams & Roth, 1998). As requirements of probation expand and intensify, the numbers of probationers in violation status will increase, creating new challenges for probation departments and probation officers attempting to bolster probation's role as an alternative to incarceration.

### *What Works With Offenders*

It is unknown to what extent limiting the use of violations will impact the effectiveness of probation in encouraging prosocial attitudes and behaviors among its clientele. Limiting the use of violations depends, in part, on the treatment services that probation has at its disposal. It also depends on the ability of probation agents to manage the array of services available and to encourage clients to make use of such services (Dell'Apa, Adams, Jorgensen & Sigurdson, 1976).

Since the early 1980s, there has been a developing literature of rehabilitation program components and characteristics that, when actually incorporated as intended, have better prospects of reducing criminogenic attitudes and behaviors of offenders. The main points from this literature are (from Gendreau, 1996):

1. Services need to be intensive and based on social learning approaches.
2. Programs should be behaviorally based, targeting the criminogenic needs of high-risk offenders.
3. Programs should be carried out in a way that facilitates the learning of new prosocial skills by the offender, taking the offender's own learning style into account in how the programs are delivered (responsivity principle).

4. Program contingencies should be administered fairly and firmly, with reinforcers outnumbering punishers by at least 4:1.
5. Therapists should be able to relate to offenders in interpersonally sensitive and constructive ways.
6. Programs must relate to the real world of the offender, but at the same time immerse the offender in an environment where prosocial activities predominate.

According to Gendreau, programs that scrupulously follow the above principles will see recidivism reductions from 25% to 60%.

A main finding from current research on community-based supervision is that more violations can be expected, without a reduction in recidivism, when probation relies on surveillance alone. Recidivism reduction depends on treatment combined with appropriate supervision, and this treatment needs to be directed toward criminogenic needs, or those thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that most directly support criminal behavior (Fulton et al., 1997). “Scared straight” approaches, though they may appeal to one’s sense of justice or fairness, do little to reduce the overall recidivism level of criminal offender populations. Programs, such as militaristic boot-camps, drug testing or electronic monitoring without a treatment component, have not been successful in reducing recidivism (MacKenzie, 1998; Taxman, 2002).

#### *Probation Officer Roles/Styles and Organizational Issues*

The general message from the above research is that probation agents/agencies have a role to play in improving the success rates of probationers beyond the responsibility to clarify consequences and monitor compliance. This requires that probation officers assume at least some responsibility for the successful completion of probation. Officers who strictly subscribe to a view of criminal behavior as a result of rational choice on the part of the offender may resist any form of responsibility for choices made by offenders on probation.

Organizational literature advises that any attempt at change in critical policies, such as violation/revocation of probationers, should fully incorporate those who are given the discretionary responsibility to interpret and carry out such policies (Deming, 1986; Lipsky, 1980). Policies requiring change on the part of staff are more likely to occur if they are congruent with the attitudes and inclinations of staff (Lewin, 1947). Given the probation movement toward an enforcement response (Harris, Clear, & Baird, 1989), the question would arise as to the degree to which the changes necessary to rationalize the violation/revocation process would be met with resistance by staff, given its significance in the supervision process, especially as it relates to the split between enforcement and treatment orientations (Burke, 2001). An assessment of how much policies controlling line officer discretion are congruent or incongruent with the inclinations of staff would give some indication as to the magnitude of the change process needed within the organization to bring this type of change about.

Though the rationalization of the violation/revocation process may require to some degree a shift in the role orientation of staff, there are indications that such a shift can occur under the right circumstances. Fulton et al. (1997) found that intensive supervision officers who participated in comprehensive training on the principles of effective rehabilitation were more receptive to the rehabilitative function of probation as opposed to probation's surveillance and control function. Ellsworth (1990) found in his survey of probation officers that most (76%) accepted the dual goals of probation, rather than the single goal of either enforcement (10%) or treatment (13%), despite the "get tough on crime" preference of the larger society.

### ☒ Connecticut's Overall Approach to Reducing Probation Violations

The state of Connecticut's approach to decreasing probation violations was largely based upon prior research. Namely, that needs-based supervision coupled with a wide array of services for probationers will likely lead to more successful probation outcomes. In addition, changes in organizational policy in handling probation violations need to be supplemented with training placing more emphasis on instilling prosocial probationer attitudes and less on enforcement of probation conditions. The PTP was one aspect of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the number of incarcerated technical violators. The strategy consisted of the creation of a caseload management plan, change in policy in responding to non-compliance of probation conditions, implementation of two special probation projects (one of which was the PTP), and enhancement of internal research and evaluation capabilities.

#### *Caseload Management Plans*

Achieving manageable probation officer caseloads was believed to be a key component in reducing technical violations. When officers are overloaded with cases, they simply lack the time to identify and follow up on non-compliance before it reaches a point of a violation warrant. For example, when faced with information that a probationer has absconded, the choice is to take the necessary time to try to locate him/her (which involves speaking with family and friends, and perhaps looking in the neighborhood), or see 25 more probationers scheduled for appointments that day. At the same time, officers are always conscious of the potential public safety risk of this individual. For this reason, a warrant for violation will likely be issued because unmanageably high caseloads make it impossible to spend the time necessary to find the individual and bring him/her back into compliance.

#### *Response to Non-Compliance Policy Change*

A written policy was created as a means of guiding field officers in conducting their work. In the area of Adult Services, more than 30 policies guided field officers in all activities from the maintenance of case files, supervision of probationers, and actions to be taken when faced with non-compliance. The changes made to this

policy required increased supervisory involvement in non-compliance, provided more structure and guidance in the use of graduated sanctions as an alternative to violation, and allowed greater flexibility when faced with new arrests involving probationers who are otherwise compliant with all probation conditions.

### *Probation Transition Program*

It is common practice in the state of Connecticut for judges to sentence convicted offenders to serve a prison term and once this prison term is completed, for the offender to be sentenced to serve a term of probation. This type of probationer is termed a “split sentence probationer” and the practice guarantees these offenders will have some type of community supervision following their release from prison. Connecticut does have parole, halfway houses, and reentry furloughs; however, it is possible for inmates to serve their entire prison sentence without participating in one of these pre-discharge programs.

The Probation Transition Program targeted high-risk inmates because this group of probationers historically has high technical violation rates. The belief was that inmates needed extra assistance in adjusting to life outside of prison and these needs would be addressed by placing high-risk probationers in specialized caseloads for the first 120 days after their release from prison. They would be supervised by highly trained probation officers with lower caseloads, be given availability to their probation officers 24 hours a day and seven days a week, and be given preference for all treatment and service programs. The overarching aim of PTP was to have probation officers focus on identifying and addressing probationers’ needs rather than rely on strict supervision and control. PTP officers were trained to use technical violations only as a last resort and after probationers had been referred to various treatment and service programs.

*Organizational Program Design.* PTP was a pilot program in five of the largest probation offices across the state of Connecticut. Two probation officers were selected for PTP caseloads within each office. Each officer had a maximum caseload of 25 PTP probationers. With smaller caseloads, PTP probation officers were required to have a high number of contacts with probationers, service providers, and members of their support network (e.g., family, employers, etc.). PTP officers were also required to be directly accessible for probationers 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Probation officers volunteered for this program and were selected based on their experience, interest in the PTP, communication skills, management skills, and willingness to be available to probationers at all times. All PTP officers were required to participate in Motivational Interviewing and Criminal Thinking training. These curricula emphasized the importance of using the principles of cognitive behavioral change and less on control and enforcement. These trainings were ongoing and involved refresher programs.

*Probationer Screening and Selection.* PTP officers were notified by the Department of Correction of eligible inmates who were within three months of prison

release. The officers would then meet with eligible inmates in the correctional institution to review conditions of probation and their obligation to report to the probation office immediately following their prison release.

During this initial screening, PTP probation officers would conduct an in-depth assessment using the LSI-R (Level of Service Inventory-Revised). The LSI-R is a 54-item measurement instrument that identifies risks and needs (Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith, 2004). It consists of ten subscales that have been found to be predictive of recidivism (criminal history, education/employment, financial, family/marital, accommodation, leisure/recreation, companions, alcohol/drug problems, emotional/personal, and attitude/orientation).

The primary selection criterion was LSI-R risk level, but PTP officers were given a large amount of discretion in selecting inmates to participate. While PTP officers were required to select inmates with the highest risk scores, they were permitted to select inmates with lower risk scores if they identified needs that PTP officers believed could be addressed through the program. The more commonly identified needs were housing, employment, substance abuse, and mental health treatment. First and foremost, probationers who did not have housing upon release were consistently chosen. Another important criterion was substance abuse. Probationers with a long history of substance abuse, especially those using substances other than marijuana, such as heroin, were likely candidates. Probationers would also be placed in PTP if they reported using drugs while incarcerated. In addition, probationers with both substance abuse and mental health concerns were given top priority. Another common consideration was the length of time a probationer was incarcerated. It was believed that the longer a probationer was incarcerated, the more he/she needed reentry assistance through PTP. At this point, the probation officer identified and arranged for services in the need areas.

Within the first 72 hours of release from prison, PTP probation officers met with probationers in the office or community. Given the extent of pre-release planning, PTP officers attempted to secure needed services before probationers left prison. In general, four face-to-face and two collateral contacts per month were made during the first four months of supervision, with additional contacts made as need arose. The goal was to stabilize the offender during this time and transfer him or her to a regular probation caseload.

PTP differed from regular probation in several ways. First, split-sentenced probationers never met with probation officers prior to leaving prison. Probation officers would contact them after they had left prison, and at the first meeting would assess their needs and review their probation case plan. It was possible for probationers to be out of prison for several weeks before they were actually being supervised or were referred for treatment services. Second, split-sentenced probationers would be assigned to general caseloads that averaged over 100 cases per probation officer. Third, PTP officers had higher contact standards than probation officers with general caseloads. PTP officers were required to have four face-to-face contacts per month with probationers compared to two face-to-face contacts for probationers on general caseloads.

Fourth, PTP officers were required to be available to their probationers 24 hours a day and seven days per week. Probation officers with general caseloads were available only during business hours (Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

The Probation Transition Program was part of a large scale organizational initiative to decrease technical violations. The overall approach sought to decrease caseload size and improve quality of supervision. The PTP was viewed as a significant aspect of this approach, in that it encompassed all of the major policy changes. The present study tested the effects of this initiative by evaluating the PTP. We compared the technical violation and new arrest rates of PTP participants to those of a comparison group and also looked at differences between PTP probationers who were violated and those who were not violated.

## ☒ Data and Methods

A quasi-experimental design with a one-year follow-up period was used to assess the Probation Transition Program's ability to reduce the number of technical violations and new arrests. In testing the outcomes of the PTP, data were collected on PTP probationers and a nonrandom comparison group of split-sentenced probationers.

### *Sample*

A total of 531 probationers were included in the evaluation of the PTP; 397 probationers were in the participation group and 134 were in a comparison group. A historical comparison group was created by collecting data on closed split-sentenced probation cases from the same five courts where the PTP was piloted. To minimize the historical affects of supervision trends and policy, we selected cases that were closed in the three-month period prior to inception of the PTP. These cases were closed because the probationer either had completed his/her probation sentence or had his/her probation terminated or revoked due to a new arrest or technical violation. A historical comparison group was utilized because it allowed us to obtain a sample of similar probationers who were not participating in the PTP. Three of the PTP offices were in the largest cities in Connecticut and all high-risk, split-sentenced probationers were selected for PTP following its inception (i.e., there were no waiting lists or similar probationers not selected for PTP); this did not afford us the opportunity to create a comparable comparison group who were on probation during the same period as PTP participants.

### *Data and Measurement*

Data for this study came from official court records, probation records, and risk scores from the Level of Service Inventory (Revised). From court records, we collected current charge information (total number of charges, total number of convictions, and sentence type and length). We also collected information from probation records pertaining to individuals' demographics, current probation supervision level,

types of special conditions, dates probation began and ended, and reason for probation termination (end of sentence, violation of probation charge, or new arrest).

The Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) is an assessment measure of risk and need factors that are widely used in criminal justice settings (Andrews et al., 2004). In Connecticut, it is given to all probationers by probation officers at the beginning of their supervision. The LSI-R recommends supervision levels (surveillance, high, medium, and low), identifies offenders' primary and secondary needs, and reports a Total Risk Score and risk scores for criminal history, education/employment, financial, family, accommodation, leisure, companions, alcohol/drug use, emotional, and attitude/orientation.

#### *Description of the PTP and Comparison Groups*

We compared the two study groups on demographic variables, legal factors, and LSI-R risk scores. Demographically, the two study groups were similar in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, education, and employment (Table 1). There were differences in marital status between the comparison group (12% were married) and the PTP group (5% were married). We also compared offenders' age at the time probation started and the differences were not statistically significant (the average age of the PTP group was 32 and the comparison group was 31).

☒ Table 1

#### Demographic Summary of PTP and Comparison Groups

	PTP (n = 397)	Comparison (n = 134)	Chi-Square Value
<b>Gender</b>			.015
Males	88%	89%	
Females	12%	11%	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			1.954
African-American	45%	45%	
Caucasian	26%	25%	
Hispanic	27%	30%	
<b>Marital Status</b>			7.568
Married	5%	11%	
Single	80%	77%	
Divorced/Sep/Widowed	15%	12%	
<b>Education</b>			1.34
No High School Diploma	65%	70%	
High School Graduate	24%	19%	
More than High School	11%	19%	
<b>Employment</b>			2.17
Unemployed	74%	67%	
Employed/Other	26%	33%	

\* Chi-square value was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

The total number of charges and total convictions were similar across the two groups (Table 2). However, there were significant differences in the length of probation sentence and LSI-R subscales. While all probationers in both groups had a probation sentence over one year, PTP probationers had a longer average sentence (39 months for PTP participants to 33 months for comparison group probationers). In addition, the LSI-R Overall Risk Score was considered “high” for both groups, but was higher for PTP participants (29.40) than for the comparison group (25.53). These differences were expected given that the comparison group was composed of all split-sentenced probationers, while PTP participants were supposed to be selected because of their higher risk levels. The higher risk score for PTP probationers led us to believe PTP probation officers were appropriately selecting those incarcerated probationers in need of the PTP.

A recent validation of the LSI-R risk scores on Connecticut probationers (Bogue, Merrion, Vanderbilt, & Tripathi, 2005) found that probationers with higher risk scores on criminal history, family, accommodations, emotional, and total risk scores were more likely to be rearrested, while alcohol/drug, attitude, criminal history, education/employment, family, and accommodations were predictive of technical violations. Given the differences between the PTP and the comparison group on some of the LSI-R risk scores that are predictive of probation violations (education/employment, alcohol/drug problems, attitude, and total risk), we would expect the PTP probationers to have higher rates of probation violations if they would not have been able to participate in the PTP.

☒ Table 2

Legal Factors and Risk Scores of PTP and Comparison Groups

	PTP (n = 397)	Comparison (n = 134)	<i>t</i> Value
Average Probation Sentence Length (months)	39	33	-3.69 *
Average Total Charges	10	11	1.26
Average Total Convictions	6	6	1.18
LSI-R Scores			
Criminal History	6.20	6.13	.373
Education/Employment	6.38	5.90	2.07 *
Financial	1.32	0.97	5.00 *
Family	1.81	1.49	3.00 *
Accommodation	1.11	0.93	2.04 *
Leisure	1.58	1.60	-.320
Companions	3.41	2.84	4.41 *
Alcohol/Drug Problems	4.03	3.48	2.25 *
Emotional	1.64	0.99	4.67 *
Attitude/Orientation	1.76	1.22	4.22 *
Total LSI-R Risk Score	29.25	25.54	5.13 *

\**t* values were statistically significant at  $p < .05$

## ☒ Findings

This study evaluated the ability of the PTP to decrease technical violations and new arrest rates. First, we compared technical violation and new arrest rates one year following PTP participants' program start date to the comparison group rates one year after they began their probation supervision. Second, we conducted multivariate analyses on the likelihood of technical violations and arrests between the two groups. Third, we conducted similar multivariate analyses using only the PTP study group to identify predictors of technical violations and arrests across demographics, legal factors, and LSI-R risk scores within the PTP group.

### *New Arrests and Technical Violations*

There were statistically significant differences between the PTP and comparison groups in technical violations (Table 3). The PTP technical violation rate (14%) was significantly lower than the comparison group technical violation rate (26%). The difference in new arrests between these two groups was not statistically significant. It is important to note that the primary goal of the PTP was to decrease technical violation rates and the PTP appeared to accomplish this goal without increasing new arrests.

☒ Table 3

### Probation Violation Types by Study Groups

	PTP (n = 397)	Comparison (n = 134)	Chi-Square Value
Technical Violations	56 (14%)	35 (26%)	11.815 *
New Arrests	91 (23%)	35 (26%)	.662
Totals	147 (36%)	70 (52%)	

\*Chi-square value was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Logistic regression was used to determine probationers' likelihood of receiving technical violations or being arrested. The dependent variable in the first analysis was whether the probationer received a technical violation and in the second analysis was whether the probationer was arrested (no = 0, and yes = 1). The independent variables were study group (PTP = 1, comparison = 0), gender, employment, education, marital status (married or not married), African-American or other race/ethnicity, years of age at the start of probation, total convictions for the current probation case, and LSI-R total risk score.

The logistical regression analysis of technical violations produced three statistically independent variables (PTP group, total convictions, and LSI-R total risk score)

(Table 4). Of these, study group membership had the most effect on receiving technical violations. PTP participants were 3.068 times less likely to receive a technical violation than probationers in the comparison group (because the odds ratio was less than 1.00, we inverted it by subtracting .326 from 1.00 to arrive at 3.068). In

☒ Table 4

#### Logistic Regression of Probationer Characteristics on Technical Violations

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
PTP Group	-1.120	.272	16.96 *	.326
Males	-.602	.340	3.140	.548
Employment	-.037	.066	.321	.963
Education	-.037	.066	.311	.964
Not Married	-.025	.195	.017	.975
African-American	.214	.250	.732	1.238
Age at Probation Start	-.002	.014	.016	.998
Total Convictions	.062	.026	5.778 *	1.064
LSI-R Total Risk Score	.071	.024	8.551 *	1.073
Constant	-1.717	1.393	1.520	.180

\*Wald was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Chi-square = 43.973,  $p < .05$

-2 Log likelihood = 430.722,  $p < .05$

Cox & Snell R square = .080

Nagelkerke R square = .135

☒ Table 5

#### Logistic Regression of Probationer Characteristics on New Arrests

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
PTP Group	-.295	.257	1.319	.744
Males	.679	.398	2.909	1.971
Employment	-.066	.057	1.355	.936
Education	-.017	.059	.082	.983
Not Married	-.478	.226	4.481 *	.620
African-American	.715	.221	10.44 *	2.045
Age at Probation Start	-.032	.013	5.905 *	.969
Total Convictions	.030	.026	1.319	1.030
LSI-R Total Risk Score	.049	.021	5.177 *	1.050
Constant	-2.297	1.346	2.912	.101

\*Wald was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Chi-square = 54.747,  $p < .05$

-2 Log likelihood = 519.234,  $p < .05$

Cox & Snell R square = .099

Nagelkerke R square = .149

addition, probationers with higher LSI-R total risk scores and more convictions resulting in their probation sentence were also more likely to be technically violated.

The logistical regression analysis of arrests found that study group membership did not have a significant effect (Table 5). Probationers most likely to be arrested during the one-year study period were African-American, were younger at the start of their probation sentence, had high LSI-R total risk scores, and were not married. African-American probationers were twice as likely (2.045) to be arrested than probationers of other races/ethnicities.

#### *PTP Study Group Analyses*

The next step in our analysis was to identify predictors of technical violations and arrests within the PTP participation group. Similar to the prior analyses, logistic regression was used to estimate the likelihood of PTP participants being technically violated or arrested. For technical violations, gender and LSI-R total risk score were the only significant predictors (Table 6). Males had the highest likelihood of being technically violated. In fact, males were twice as likely to be violated as females (the inverted odds ratio is equal to 2.222).

☒ Table 6

#### Logistic Regression of PTP Participant Characteristics on Technical Violations

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
Males	-.799	.394	4.105 *	.450
Employment	-.053	.083	.409	.948
Education	.013	.081	.026	1.013
Married	.038	.232	.028	.868
African-American	.061	.312	.038	1.063
Age at Probation Start	-.004	.018	.039	.996
Total Convictions	.043	.032	1.828	1.044
LSI-R Total Risk Score	.061	.031	3.851 *	1.063
Constant	-2.482	1.753	2.005	.084

\*Wald was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Chi-square = 16.636,  $p < .05$

-2 Log likelihood = 294.245,  $p < .05$

Cox & Snell R square = .041

Nagelkerke R square = .076

The analysis of those PTP participants who were arrested found that marital status, LSI-R total risk score, race/ethnicity, total convictions, gender, and age at the start of probation were significant predictors (Table 7). Probationers who were not married had a higher likelihood of being rearrested (the inverted odds ratio is equal to 3.115) than probationers who were married. Similar to technical violations, male probationers in PTP were much more likely to be arrested than females

(3.056 times more). Overall, it appears that PTP participants most likely to be arrested were younger and more serious offenders.

☒ Table 7

Logistic Regression of PTP Participant Characteristics on New Arrests

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
Males	1.117	4.99	5.016 *	3.056
Employment	-.073	.069	1.123	.930
Education	.002	.071	.001	1.002
Married	-1.137	.379	8.986 *	.321
African-American	.670	.269	6.219 *	1.955
Age at Probation Start	-.035	.016	4.571 *	.966
Total Convictions	.074	.030	5.934 *	1.077
LSI-R Total Risk Score	.081	.028	8.579 *	1.085
Constant	-4.038	1.749	5.330	.018

\*Wald was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Chi-square = 66.145,  $p < .05$

-2 Log likelihood = 356.781,  $p < .05$

Cox & Snell R square = .155

Nagelkerke R square = .235

☒ Table 8

Logistic Regression of PTP Participant LSI-R Risk Scores on Technical Violations

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Significance
Criminal History	.041	.092	.199	1.042
Education/Employment	.059	.084	.503	1.061
Financial	.781	.283	7.603 *	2.184
Family	.089	.160	.312	1.093
Accommodation	-.043	.183	.055	.958
Leisure	.304	.291	1.098	1.356
Companions	-.079	.165	.229	.924
Alcohol/Drug	.177	.068	6.775 *	1.194
Emotional	-.162	.110	2.157	.851
Attitude/Orientation	.039	.122	.103	1.040
Constant	-4.614	1.029	20.113	.010

\*Wald was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Chi-square = 25.354,  $p < .05$

-2 Log likelihood = 286.679,  $p < .05$

Cox & Snell R square = .062

Nagelkerke R square = .114

Additional logistic regression analyses were conducted on the PTP participation group using the LSI-R subscales as independent variables. The analysis of LSI-R scores revealed that PTP participants who were technically violated had high financial and drug/alcohol risk scores (Table 8). That is, PTP participants who relied on outside sources of financial support and those with drug and alcohol problems were most likely to receive technical violations. Coupled with the results of the prior logistical regression, PTP participants most often being technically violated appear to be male drug offenders.

The logistical regression analysis of arrests of PTP participants found that those most likely to be arrested had high risk scores for companions, education/employment, and attitude/orientation (Table 9). These probationers were heavily influenced by a negative peer group, had limited education or employment, and had a procriminal attitude. The PTP participants most likely to be arrested within one year of starting the PTP appear to be the more serious offenders.

☒ Table 9

#### Logistic Regression of PTP Participant LSI-R Risk Scores on New Arrests

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Significance
Criminal History	.084	.075	1.266	1.088
Education/Employment	.180	.070	6.614 *	1.198
Financial	.132	.211	.395	1.142
Family	-.064	.130	.240	.938
Accommodation	.218	.150	2.108	1.244
Leisure	-.025	.228	.012	.976
Companions	.477	.174	7.516 *	1.611
Alcohol/Drug	.008	.053	.020	1.008
Emotional	-.070	.094	.561	.932
Attitude/Orientation	.235	.101	5.410 *	1.265
Constant	-5.326	.948	31.582	.005

\*Wald was statistically significant at  $p < .05$

Chi-square = 37.457,  $p < .05$

-2 Log likelihood = 387.538,  $p < .05$

Cox & Snell R square = .090

Nagelkerke R square = .137

#### ☒ Discussion

This study evaluated the Probation Transition Program by assessing technical violation and new arrest rates for PTP participants and a comparison group across demographic, legal, and risk assessment factors. The study found that the PTP group had significantly fewer technical violations than the comparison group but not significantly fewer arrests. The analyses of who was technically violated or

arrested within the PTP participation group found that male drug offenders were most likely to be violated while young African-American males with multiple convictions, negative peer groups, little independent financial support, limited education, and a criminal attitude/orientation were most likely to be arrested. We discuss three primary implications of these findings.

First, despite pre-program differences with the comparison group, PTP participants had significantly lower technical violation rates (14% to 26%) one year after prison release. The predominant question from these results was whether the PTP had more effect on changing probation officers' or probationers' behavior. That is, did PTP officers simply stop violating probationers or did probationers' behavior improve as a result of the PTP? We believe that it was a combination of both.

Throughout the evaluation we conducted informal interviews with PTP probation officers. They often attributed the lower technical violation rates to reduced caseloads and their 24-hour availability for probationers. PTP probation officers were less likely to technically violate a probationer who was making progress or showing signs of long-term success. Without the reduced caseloads, PTP probation officers would not have enough contact with probationers to know how well they were doing in treatment programs, employment, and with personal issues. It appears that PTP officers were less likely to violate probationers than probation officers with higher caseloads. In addition, PTP officers frequently commented that reduced caseloads allowed them to more effectively refer probationers to appropriate services and treatment by being able to spend more time identifying available services and encouraging probationers to attend.

Second, fewer technical violations did not appear to increase arrest rates for new offenses. One concern at the onset of the program was that PTP officers would be hesitant to use technical violations at the risk of decreasing public safety. Though it was not statistically significant, the arrest rate was lower for the PTP participation group than the comparison group (23% to 26%). If PTP officers were slow to technically violate probationers solely because of the program mandate, we would have expected the PTP participation group to have a significantly higher arrest rates. The PTP appears to have been able to decrease technical violation rates without a spike in new arrests.

Third, there were pronounced differences between PTP probationers who were technically violated and those who were rearrested. PTP technical violators were males with high financial and alcohol/drug LSI-R risk subscale scores, while PTP participants who were arrested were single, young, African-American males and were more serious offenders in terms of LSI-R risk level and criminal charges. Technical violators appear to be serious drug users who could not comply with the conditions of their probation or successfully complete drug treatment. On the other hand, PTP participants who were arrested were very high risk and had multiple criminogenic needs (e.g., lower levels of education or limited employment opportunities, negative peer groups, and poor attitudes regarding noncriminal activity). Even with low caseloads, higher contact standards than regular probation,

and enhanced services provided to PTP participants, it appears that the needs of this group of offenders were beyond the ability of the PTP to decrease criminal behavior. Attention should be given to this group in the future to identify strategies that more effectively address their criminogenic needs and may decrease their likelihood of being arrested.

## 📌 Conclusion

The evaluation of the Probation Transition Program produced promising results for split-sentenced probationers. The PTP was able to reduce technical violations without compromising public safety. While we attribute the success of the PTP to lower probation officer caseloads and probation officer availability, we must also acknowledge Connecticut's widespread changes in organizational strategy. The two primary changes were the creation of a caseload management plan and a change in policy in responding to non-compliance of probation conditions. Although we were unable to measure the effects of these organizational changes, we are confident that the PTP would not have been as successful without the organizational support it received.

The PTP was created out of statewide concern over the prison population, specifically, how to decrease the number of technical violators of probation sentenced to prison. Connecticut's approach addressed both probationers' criminogenic factors and organizational strategies on handling probation violations. This study demonstrates that multifaceted approaches can lead to significant reductions in technical violations

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