



A SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR RELEASING AUTHORITIES TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY SUPERVISION PRACTICES



About the CSRC

The Community Supervision Resource Center (CSRC) serves **pretrial, probation, and parole** supervision agencies and helps them align their operations with best and evidence-based practices. The CSRC supports state, local, and tribal jurisdictions and agencies in implementing supervision policies, programs, and practices that promote successful outcomes and ensure public safety. Through centralizing **resources**, offering **training**, and providing **technical assistance**, the CSRC will strengthen agency practices and build a network of practitioners committed to pursuing innovative, equitable, and best and evidence-based practices.

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The Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) manages the CSRC. CEPP is a national nonprofit that helps practitioners, policymakers, and communities reimagine a justice system that works for all. CEPP works on projects across the spectrum of the criminal justice system—from pretrial to sentencing, as well as corrections, probation, parole, and reintegration.

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Introduction

Releasing authorities make critical decisions that impact community supervision agencies and the people they supervise. This self-assessment provides a structured way for releasing authorities to analyze policies and practices related to community supervision, gain insight into how they align with evidence-based and promising practices, and determine where attention should be focused within the parameters of its authority and discretion to improve outcomes for people on community supervision and their communities.

How to Complete the Self-Assessment

This self-assessment is divided into seven supervision-focused strategies:

1. Develop effective supervision strategies in collaboration with your community supervision agency.
2. Limit the number of general conditions and impose special conditions that are aligned with evidence-based practice.
3. Improve and encourage a seamless transition by coordinating the release process with institutional and community supervision staff.
4. Develop an evidence-based approach to addressing noncompliant supervision behavior.
5. Develop an approach and termination process that incentivizes and rewards supervision compliance and achieving case plan goals.
6. Develop performance measures and collect and report on data associated with supervision policies and outcomes.
7. Identify and address racial and gender disparities in community supervision.

The self-assessment should be completed by a team comprised of all releasing authority members and staff responsible for drafting and revising policies (or who have significant responsibility in areas related to supervision-focused strategies). Each team member should fill out the self-assessment individually.¹ It may be necessary to gather additional information to answer some questions.

Completed assessments should be submitted to a designated person responsible for aggregating and distributing the results. The aggregated results should highlight areas with:

- considerable differences in answers,
- great similarity in answers, and
- a significant number of “no” or “to some degree” answers.

¹ The self-assessment uses “you” and “your” to refer to the releasing authority, not to an individual team member.

Strategy 1: Develop effective supervision strategies in collaboration with your community supervision agency.

Although releasing authorities are responsible for decisions that drive the post-release supervision process and affect the outcomes of impacted people (e.g., setting supervision conditions, responding to supervision behaviors), they often operate independently of community supervision agencies. In addition, releasing authorities and community supervision agencies do not always communicate or include each other when developing policies that impact supervision.

Releasing authorities and their community supervision agencies should work together to develop a shared philosophy of supervision that incorporates evidence-based strategies, including approaches that have been shown to be effective with specific populations (e.g., gender-based, people with a mental illness, people with a developmental disability, emerging adults, tribal and rural communities) and offenses (e.g., sex and/or violent offenses), and that use technology effectively.

Questions

- Have you developed both a working relationship with your community supervision partner beyond individual case decision-making activities and a shared philosophy regarding the purpose of supervision?
Yes No To some degree
- Do you include your community supervision partner when developing approaches to matters such as condition-setting, responding to noncompliance, and early terminations?
Yes No To some degree
- Do you collaborate with your community supervision partner to identify and remove potential barriers to successful supervision outcomes?
Yes No To some degree
- Do you collaborate with your community supervision partner to identify and address issues and take steps to promote successful outcomes for specific populations?
Yes No To some degree
- Does your releasing authority collaborate with its community supervision partner to adopt supervision strategies targeted at violence prevention?
Yes No To some degree
- Do you collaborate with your community supervision partner to explore the value and potential use of technologies that can aid in accomplishing supervision objectives?
Yes No To some degree

Strategy 2: Limit the number of general conditions and impose special conditions that are aligned with evidence-based practice.

Releasing authorities are commonly responsible for imposing and modifying the conditions that establish the framework for post-release community supervision. It is important that releasing authorities understand the impact that the number and type of conditions it imposes have on supervision practices, including case planning, and outcomes. Excessive conditions can impede supervision compliance, while targeting conditions based on risk and criminogenic needs can positively impact recidivism reduction and help promote more successful outcomes. Releasing authorities should also consider adopting a process that allows for modification of conditions during supervision to incentivize compliance and align with changing circumstances. Lastly, efforts should be made to limit the use of onerous financial conditions.

Questions

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| <p>1. Do your policies and practices encourage the imposition of a more limited set of basic conditions that are relevant, are realistic, and target community well-being and safety?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> | <p>5. Do you use the results from risk and needs tools created for specific offense types (e.g., sex offenses, intimate partner violence, other violent offenses) to identify additional conditions, programs, or other requirements?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> |
| <p>2. Do you use the results of an empirically based risk and needs assessment tool(s) when imposing special conditions?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> | <p>6. Do you use the results from risk and needs tools created for specialized populations (e.g., women, people with mental illness) and consider their unique needs when imposing special conditions?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> |
| <p>3. Do you have policies and practices that impose special conditions focused on the most influential criminogenic needs and only on people assessed as moderate or high risk?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> | <p>7. Do you have policies and practices that eliminate and/or reduce the use of financial conditions?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> |
| <p>4. Do you have policies and practices that limit the setting of special conditions on people assessed as low risk?</p> <p>Yes No To some degree</p> | |

Strategy 3: Improve and encourage a seamless transition by coordinating the release process with institutional and community supervision staff.

A coordinated and collaborative transition and release process between the releasing authority and its institutional and community supervision partners enhances the potential for successful outcomes. The period immediately following release from prison has been identified as a particularly high-risk time for people returning to their communities. Frontloading resources and services during the initial release period can help people on supervision acclimate more successfully to their communities and increase supervision compliance.

Questions

1. Do you work with institutional and community partners to help people transition toward release and community placement?

Yes No To some degree
2. Do you have policies requiring the timely development of suitable release plans and coordination with institutional and community supervision partners so as not to delay releases?

Yes No To some degree
3. Do you encourage and support your community supervision partner to frontload services for returning people, providing more intensive services initially and then diminishing the intensity over time as behavior permits?

Yes No To some degree
4. Do you collaborate with your community supervision partner and other stakeholders to provide appropriate resources to returning people to aid in reentry?

Yes No To some degree

Strategy 4: Develop an evidence-based approach to addressing noncompliant supervision behavior.

Releasing authorities and their community supervision partners should collaborate to address noncompliant and antisocial behaviors during supervision. A clearly defined and agreed-upon approach will set expectations for all stakeholders, including those on supervision, and help foster a trusting relationship between supervised people and agents. Releasing authorities and their community supervision partners should implement proportional, consistent, and risk-based policies that encourage agents to use targeted interventions instead of sanctions. Arrest and revocation should be used sparingly and only in response to behaviors that impact public safety.

Questions

1. Have you collaborated with your community supervision partner to agree on a policy-driven approach to addressing noncompliant behaviors that promotes the use of evidence-based practices?

Yes	No	To some degree
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2. Have you adopted policies that:
 - a. Clearly define noncompliant behaviors?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - b. Include swift, certain, and consistent responses to noncompliant behavior?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - c. Align responses to noncompliant behavior with the severity of the behavior and the person's risk level?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - d. Ensure consistent responses to noncompliance while allowing agents to use targeted interventions that are responsive to racial, cultural, and gender differences?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - e. Address absconding in a way that permits restoration to supervision in lieu of revocation under certain circumstances?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - f. Outline limited circumstances under which revocation may be appropriate?

Yes	No	To some degree
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Strategy 5: Develop an approach and termination process that incentivizes and rewards supervision compliance and achieving case plan goals.

A termination process that rewards compliance and accomplishing case plan goals can be a powerful incentive to achieving and sustaining prosocial behavior. Releasing authorities should collaborate with their community supervision partners to develop the standards and expectations that can lead to rewards as well as termination. The standards and expectations, along with the process for requesting termination from the releasing authority, should be clearly communicated to people on supervision. When termination is denied, the releasing authority should clearly indicate to the person on supervision and their agent the factors for the denial and expectations to be fulfilled for future submissions to be granted.

Questions

1. Have you worked with your community supervision partner to agree on a policy-driven approach to using incentives and rewards and to granting terminations prior to expected supervision completion dates, provided guidance to supervision staff, and outlined expectations for people on supervision?

Yes	No	To some degree
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2. Have you adopted policies that:
 - a. Clearly define the types of incentives and rewards your community supervision partner could use to encourage prosocial behaviors?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - b. Incentivize compliance by permitting the removal and/or reduction of conditions when they have been addressed?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - c. Permit and encourage your community supervision partner to submit recommendations for termination prior to the expected date of supervision completion?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - d. Clearly define the progress that needs to be achieved regarding compliance and conditions in order for a termination to be approved?

Yes	No	To some degree
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 - e. Include standards or other specific factors for granting terminations that reflect the value of rehabilitative and risk-reduction activities while also considering public safety?

Yes	No	To some degree
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3. Do you provide feedback to the person on supervision and their agent following a termination denial that outlines the reasons for the denial and the expectations to be met for a future termination submission to be approved?

Yes	No	To some degree
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4. Do you allow people on supervision to petition for termination on their own behalf?

Yes	No	To some degree
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Strategy 6: Develop performance measures and collect and report on data associated with supervision policies and outcomes.

To understand the impact that policies and practices related to community supervision have on desired goals, including the impact across race, ethnicity, gender, and ability, releasing authorities must have access to metrics collected by their community supervision partners. Releasing authorities should collaborate with their community supervision partners to track data and establish and review outcomes to help them achieve goals, identify areas for improvement, and determine if changes to policies and practices need to be made.

Questions

1. Do you have access to metrics regarding supervision outcomes for the people you release to community supervision?
Yes No To some degree
2. Do you, as a group, review these metrics on a routine basis?
Yes No To some degree
3. Have you developed performance measures to understand the impact of your conditions on people on supervision?
Yes No To some degree
4. Have you developed performance measures to understand the impact of your responses to violation behaviors on people on supervision?
Yes No To some degree
5. Have you developed performance measures to understand the impact of your approvals and denials of requests for termination of supervision on people being supervised?
Yes No To some degree
6. Have you incorporated a process to revise policies and practices based on the review of supervision metrics?
Yes No To some degree

Strategy 7: Identify and address racial and/or gender disparities in matters associated with community supervision.

Applying an equity lens to the vision, mission, and goals of releasing authorities and their community supervision partners is critically important. Racial, ethnic, and gender disparities that cannot be explained by differences in offenses or risk factors exist in release decisions, supervision measures, and outcomes. Accurate data is necessary to document and quantify disparities, identify areas where reform is needed, and ensure equitable decisions, policies, practices, and programming across race, ethnicity, and gender.

Questions

1. Do you, with your community supervision partner, apply cultural competence considerations and practices to decisions, policies, procedures, and programming?
Yes No To some degree
2. Do you provide training and educational opportunities on bias and cultural competence to your members and staff?
Yes No To some degree
3. Do you provide training and educational opportunities on gender-responsive and trauma-informed practices to your members and staff?
Yes No To some degree
4. Do you disaggregate performance measure data by race and gender?
Yes No To some degree
5. Do you use risk and needs tools that are validated and analyzed regularly to ensure that they do not further exacerbate racial and gender disparities?
Yes No To some degree
6. Have you collaborated with your community supervision partner to conduct a racial and ethnic disparity analysis?
Yes No To some degree
7. Do you collaborate with your community supervision partner to seek feedback from people who experience racial and gender disparities?
Yes No To some degree

Analyzing Results

1. Identify and prioritize areas of interest or concern:

After results have been aggregated and distributed, convene a meeting(s) to identify and prioritize areas of interest or concern to address. The following questions can be used to encourage these discussions:

- What do the results indicate about current policies and practices?
 - What progress has been made toward the strategies?
 - In which areas would improvements in practice have the greatest impact on people on supervision, their communities, and community supervision agencies?
 - What challenges are we likely to face in achieving the strategies?
 - In areas where improvement is desired, what would need to occur to achieve improvement? Is that realistic? If not, are there alternatives?
 - In what area do we need the most assistance? What type of assistance do we need?
 - What is energizing or exciting about pursuing improvements?
-

2. Convene a working group

- Having determined and prioritized areas, issues, or questions for further attention, convene a working group to identify and make recommendations on how to strengthen practices in these areas.
- The working group should include staff from your community supervision partner agency to ensure their perspectives are represented.
- Create a charter that lists the working group's members and that clearly articulates the group's purpose, ground rules, specific activities and outcomes, methods for documenting progress, and timeline .
- Designate a working group chair, record keeper, and meeting facilitator.

Assistance Available from the CSRC

You may require assistance in developing strategies to improve your practice. The CSRC offers the following:

- **Training:** The CSRC hosts webinars on community supervision topics and maintains a catalog of recorded trainings. Requests can also be made for the CSRC training team to conduct a focused training event.
- **Technical Assistance:** If on-site assistance is desired, a technical assistance (TA) request can be submitted to the CSRC TA team. TA requests address issues that require short-term support.
- **Resources:** The CSRC maintains a curated library of relevant research and other resources that can help you broaden your understanding of a variety of community supervision topics.

More information about these opportunities can be found on the CSRC website: www.communitysupervisioncenter.org.

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