

Nebraska Judicial News

Special Events Publication of the Nebraska Supreme Court

March 2006

A New Day: Probation System's Transformation

A new era has dawned in the realm of probation services in Nebraska. Three innovative adult community corrections initiatives were launched by the Office of Probation Administration (OPA) in early 2006. Each initiative signals a major step in the statewide transformation of probation. Offenders charged or convicted of a felony drug offense, if eligible, could now be headed for treatment programs rather than to prison.

As a means to avert prison overcrowding of crisis proportions, the Nebraska Legislature in 2005 passed the Community Corrections Act which established the Community Corrections Council. The Council's primary purpose is to reduce incarceration as a means of managing nonviolent offenders. As a first step, the Council targeted the felony drug population and looked to the Office of Probation Administration and the Adult Parole Administration to propose a response.

According to Ellen Fabian Brokofsky, State Probation Administrator since October 2005, substance abuse treatment, shown by research to be an effective means of crime control, is a viable alternative to prison. The Legislature's actions have afforded an opportunity for the creation of new programs that are designed to de-



State Speaker of the Legislature, Senator Kermit Brashear of Omaha, is interviewed by John Knicely of WOWTV regarding his work with the Community Corrections Council and the benefits of Probation's new programs.

crease prison populations, reduce recidivism, and make communities safer. Probation has met this new programming challenge by developing:

- A statewide model for the delivery of substance abuse services
- A Fee-for-Service Voucher Program to pay for substance abuse services
- A Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision (SSAS) Program to provide quality case management to this particular population of offenders

Standardized Model for the Delivery of Substance Abuse Services

On January 1, 2006, Nebraska's Supreme Court adopted a new Court



Three New Programs Launched by State Probation

Probation I.T. Business System Analyst Donna Hasse, and I.T. Applications Analyst Kim Bunch review the on-line registration mock-up for the Standardized Model.



rule regarding the Standardized Model for the Delivery of Substance Abuse Services. This Standardized Model recognizes the connection between substance abuse and crime and promotes effective treatment as a means for reducing criminal activity.

While the Standardized Model is intended for use with all offenders within the justice system, it is required by the Court's rule for those convicted of a felony drug offense or charged with a felony drug offense under a specialty court as defined by the Community Corrections Act (on the Web site: www.nebraskacourt.com on the rules page or at <http://court.nol.org/rules/SubstanceAbuse35.htm>) The Standardized Model specifically sets up standards for screening, risk assessment, evaluations, and levels of care. Trained providers who are interested in serving justice offenders and agree to the elements of the Model may register their services with OPA.

Fee for Service Voucher Program

Through utilization of almost \$1 million in probation offender fees this year and a general fund legislative appropriation of \$2.5 million over the next two years designated to fund felony drug offender treatment, the OPA has developed the Fee-for-Service Voucher Program. This program is intended to help overcome one of the major barriers (ability to pay) offenders face when attempting to address their substance abuse problems.

Judge John Icenogle (l) discusses legislative testimony before the judiciary committee with Julie Rogers (r), Executive Policy Analyst of the Community Corrections Council.

Working with the Community Corrections Council and the Adult Parole Administration of the Department of Correctional Services, the OPA is giving offenders the ability to obtain substance abuse evaluations and/or treatment by paying registered providers through the voucher process.

Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision (SSAS) Program

The SSAS program foundationally is based on four core components:

1. Substance Abuse Treatment
2. Cognitive Behavioral Programming
3. Day and Evening Reporting
4. Quality Case Management and Field Supervision

All treatment, including length of time spent in treatment, is customized to the offender's individual needs. The goals of the SSAS Program are to:

- Lower Levels of Recidivism and Relapse
- Improve Education and Employment



Three New Programs Launched by State Probation



- Facilitate Reintegration into the Community

According to Deb Minardi, newly named Deputy Administrator/Community Corrections Coordinator for OPA, the SSAS Program is being piloted in sites around the state. Those sites are located in Douglas, Sarpy, Lancaster, Dakota, Dawson, Buffalo, Cass and Otoe Counties. Highly skilled probation officers are assigned to work with serious probation and parole offenders in each jurisdiction. The SSAS Program is founded on evidence-based principles and when implemented will incorporate “best practice” proven approaches to case management in each location. Each officer will work with only 24 high-risk offenders to ensure that individual treatment needs are addressed and that each offender is closely supervised.



Deb Minardi explains SSAS program to members of the Community Corrections Council.

Both Brokofsky and Minardi are highly optimistic about forecasting the success of the SSAS Program anticipating a 60% reduction of felony re-arrests during the first two years following the successful completion of the program.

Minardi gives assurance that data will be collected from the start of the program so that outcome evaluations of individual offenders and the program itself is a built-in feature. She states that incremental assessments of an offender can be made at any time to determine if the desired level of improvement is being achieved.

In Nebraska, evidence-based practices involving alternatives to prison for drug offenders are signaling a paradigm shift in probation and parole philosophies. As this form of community corrections takes hold, veteran employees in both the probation and parole systems will be receiving training related to the Standardized Model and the two other new initiatives.

Brokofsky sums up the vision of this community corrections plan in this manner:

“We believe that targeting the treatment needs of offenders ultimately reduces recidivism and enhances public safety. We want to see people not facing re-arrest and ending up in institutions. We’re talking about offenders becoming productive citizens. Seeing offenders acquire high school diplomas and specialized employable skills would be our goal.” Building upon the anticipated success of SSAS in the pilot sites, Brokofsky indicates that OPA is planning to expand statewide as soon as funding is available and intends to use evidence-based practices in all of OPA’s future adult and juvenile offender programming.



State Probation Administrator, Ellen Fabian Brokofsky (r), congratulates ISP Officer Lorna McDermott (l) following completion of SSAS training.



SSAS Sites

District 2

Chief Dick Brown
402-375-1250

SSAS Officers:

Mike Carlson and
Sophia LeMoine
Site: Dakota City

District 4

Chief Ron Broich
402-444-4648

SSAS Officers:

Erin Clark and
Shantelle Pohlman
Site: Omaha

District 5

Chief Jodi York
402-593-2199

SSAS Officers:

Mike Sliva and
Jeff Jennings
Sites: Sarpy, Cass, and
Otoe Counties

District 6

Chief Steve Rowoldt
402-441-7777

SSAS Officers:

Gene Cotter and
Tom Rathbun
Site: Lincoln

District 9

Chief Doug Watson
308-534-4350

and District 17

Chief Kent Lilly
308-236-1251

(Shared SSAS sites)

SSAS Officers:
Garth Mins and
Bianca Haessler

Sites: Lexington and
Kearney

Three New Programs Launched by State Probation



Deb A. Minardi is the Deputy Probation Administrator / Community Corrections Programs Coordinator and is responsible for Probation's newly-created specialized programming. She was appointed to this position January 1, 2006. In her 25 years with Probation, Ms. Minardi has worked as a probation officer, chief deputy probation officer, and, most recently, as Chief Probation Officer in Omaha, a position she has held since 1989. She has also conducted numerous training programs both nationally and statewide.

Ms. Minardi oversees the specialized programming of the Office of Probation Administration in coordination with the Community Corrections Council and other related agencies. Examples of these related programs include Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision (SSAS), Standardized Model for Delivery of Substance

Abuse Services, Offender Voucher Treatment Program. She will also oversee Probation's involvement with the Work Ethic Camp (WEC) and the Intensive Supervision Probation (ISP) program.



Christine E. Salvatore is the Justice Treatment Systems Specialist for the Office of Probation Administration. She began working in this position in December 2005 and is primarily responsible for the multifaceted fee-for-service voucher treatment program involving Nebraska State Probation, Parole and specialized courts.

Salvatore, formally the Coordinator for the Lancaster County Adult Drug Court, brings extensive experience in both substance abuse treatment services and accounting.

Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision (SSAS) Program Training Graduates



Back row l to r: Deb Minardi, Deputy Probation Administrator / Community Corrections Programs Coordinator; Garth Mins, District #9, Lexington; Gene Cotter, District #6, Lincoln; Tom Rathbun, District #6, Lincoln; Mike Sliva, District #5, Papillion; Ellen Fabian Brokofsky, Probation Administrator, Lincoln.

Front row l to r: Bianca Haessler, District #9, Lexington; Mike Carlson, District #2, Dakota City; Sophia LeMoine, District #2, Dakota City; Brenda Zimmer, District #5, Papillion; Jennifer Ahrens, District #4, Omaha; Erin Clark, District #4, Omaha.



NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT
Office of Public Information

www.nebraskacourt.com

Contact: Janet Bancroft | (402) 471-3730 | jhammer@nsc.state.ne.us