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## Offender Substance Abuse Report

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## Regional Assessment Centers for Technical Parole Violators: The Next Step in the Alternatives to Incarceration Continuum

by Ralph Fretz

### Introduction

This paper describes the most recent addition to the New Jersey Parole Board's continuum of alternatives to incarceration for technical parole violators (TPVs). In 2008, the New Jersey Parole Board, in collaboration with Community Education Centers, a private correctional treatment company that partners with public agencies, opened two secure residential facilities called Residential Assessment Centers (RACs). The RACs' purpose has been to evaluate high-risk TPVs who would previously have been

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## The First Twenty Years of Drug Treatment Courts: A Brief Description of Their History and Impact

by Arthur J. Lurigio

### Trends in Drug Use and Arrest Rates

Since the 1980s, an overwhelming emphasis on law enforcement strategies to combat illegal drug possession and sales has resulted in dramatic increases in the nation's arrest and incarceration rates. Although general population surveys reported declines in illegal drug use during the 1990s, rates of arrest and incarceration for drug offenses rose at a record pace into the 21st century (Tonry, 1999). Drug offenses have been among the largest categories of arrests for the past 20 years. From 1980 to 2000, arrests for drug offenses more than doubled. In 2000 alone, more than 1.5 million persons were arrested for a drug offense—more than four-fifths for a drug possession (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).

Prison sentences for drug offenses contributed significantly to the burgeoning of the incarcerated population in the United States. Between 1990 and 1999, the number of drug offenders in prison grew by more than 100,000, constituting 20% of the total increase in the country's prison population. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of persons incarcerated for a drug crime accounted for the largest percentage of growth in the nation's prison population (49%; Harrison & Beck, 2005). At year-end 2005, more than 1.2 million

people were incarcerated in state prison—approximately 240,000 of them for a drug crime (Harrison & Beck, 2006).

By the late 1980s, drug-addicted offenders, in unprecedented numbers, were clogging the criminal justice system at every stage—from arrest to prisoner reentry. Rigorous prosecutions and sentencing policies are very expensive and largely ineffective in reversing the cycle of drug use and crime; especially costly and ill advised is the use of prison to solve America's chronic drug problem (Hennessy, 2001). Hence, various community-based programs were instituted to curb the alarming rise in drug-related imprisonment. The proliferation of drug cases, particularly in large urban jurisdictions, forced numerous courts to adopt new approaches for clearing crowded dockets. An example of such a program is drug treatment court (DTC), the most popular and widely adopted specialized drug court model in the United States (Cooper & Trotter, 1994). In their various forms, drug courts have been distinguished by several features, such as:

- Expedited case processing;
- Outpatient treatment; and
- Support services (e.g., job placement and housing).

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returned to incarceration. These violators often have absconded from parole or been terminated from residential programs for disciplinary infractions.

The paper describes how the reincarceration of TPVs has contributed to the exploding prison population during the past three decades; the parole boards' responses to TPVs, including a recent method of dealing with TPVs through a system of graduated sanctions; and New Jersey's innovative methods of using such graduated sanctions, which have contributed to reductions in the state's prison population. The paper also discusses the planning, challenges, and implementation of the RAC program, along with its cost savings and enhanced public safety

benefits, and presents case studies that illustrate the RAC program process.

**Scope of the Problem**

The rate of incarceration in the United States has increased at an alarming pace for the past four decades (Travis, 2003). This explosion in inmate numbers has been attributed to a number of factors, including:

- Changes in sentencing laws at the state and federal level;
- The increased length of sentences, particularly the increase in mandatory minimums; and
- The tripling of drug-related arrests and convictions (Kleykamp et al., 2008).

The reincarceration of parolees for technical violations has also played a sig-

nificant role in the ever expanding U.S. prison population. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) 2002 national recidivism study found that 26% of reincarcerations were for technical parole violations (Langan & Levin, 2002).

The prison population explosion has had both short-term and long-term negative effects on the population of the United States. For example, in 2007, more than 7.3 million persons were under some form of correctional supervision, including probation, parole, and prison (Sabol & Couture, 2008). Individuals under correctional supervision face numerous obstacles related to gaining and maintaining employment, housing, and educational loans (Petersilia, 2003), and parolees

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have had consistently low rates (46%) of successful completion of parole without being reincarcerated (Langan & Levin, 2002). States and other agencies have begun to recognize that the current system of correctional supervision has to undergo a significant revision of its policies and procedures surrounding correctional supervision.

Over the last three to four decades, parole has moved from a method of supervised support for prisoners as they reenter their communities to a management tool that classifies and isolates offenders as they reenter society (Steen & Opsal, 2007). All too often, parole officers are placed in the untenable position of enforcing, with few or no resources, a series of general and specific parole conditions. The parole officer is often left to use his one available management tool—revocation of parole and return to prison for the offender. Steen and Opsal (2007) find that the officer's decision to revoke an offender's parole for technical reasons may be partly based on the offender's race, age, and gender, with young black males being at highest risk for return to prison due to a technical violation.

In response to the high cost of incarceration and the dubious results of surveillance and sanctions as post-prison methods of supervision, some states have instituted a system of graduated sanctions to deal with technical parole violations. Other states have either not instituted such systems or have systems that are fragmented and unreliable. A PEW Public Safety Performance Report (Burke et al., 2007) indicates that in Illinois, which has a system of graduated sanctions, only 2.5% of the released prisoners were reincarcerated for technical parole violations, whereas in California, which has no such system, 38.5% of released prisoners were reincarcerated for technical violations.

**Supervision, Risk, and Recidivism**

Solomon, Kachnowski, and Bhati (2005) used the data from the 2002 BJS national recidivism study to compare offenders who left prison under supervision with offenders who left without supervision. The authors note that the function of parole has shifted from operating as a social service entity to that of a monitoring and sanctioning body. At the same time as parole has shifted to this more surveillance- and punishment-

oriented function, the number of offenders assigned to parole has grown significantly. Solomon et al. (2005) question whether the use of parole as a surveillance mechanism has enhanced public safety, because this method has not decreased the rates of post-release arrest.

After analyzing the BJS data, Solomon and colleagues found that the offenders who benefited the most from post-release supervision tended to:

- Be black;
- Have had fewer arrests than the average subjects in the sample;
- Be serving a sentence for parole or probation violations; and
- Have been convicted of mostly public order offenses.

Offenders who benefited the least from post-release supervision tended to:

- Be white;
- Have an extensive criminal history; and
- Have been serving a sentence for a new conviction for violent or drug-related offenses.

In other words, as defined by the groups' rates of recidivism, low-risk offenders benefited the most from post-release surveillance and high-risk offenders benefited the least. This finding was consistent with the Washington State Policy findings that close supervision of high-risk offenders without treatment is less cost-effective than close supervision with treatment (Aos et al., 2006). In fact, Aos et al. found that supervision alone was problematic for the state in terms of increased costs and recidivism.

A significant portion of technical violators are returned to prison for drug-related breaches of parole stipulations that include:

- Testing positive for drugs/alcohol;
- Failing to attend substance abuse treatment; or

- Missing a parole appointment due to drug abuse (Travis & Lawrence, 2002; Petersilia, 2003).

Experts have consistently recommended the use of several tools in dealing with TPVs:

- Graduated sanctions;
- Objective risk assessment instruments to guide the graduated sanctions; and
- Positive reinforcement for prosocial behavior (Burke et al., 2007; Petersilia, 2007; Solomon et al., 2005; Travis, 2003;).

**The Use of Graduated Sanctions**

In an effort to deal with the marked increase of parolees being reincarcerated for technical violations, some states have developed a system of graduated sanctions. For example, the

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***Parole has moved from a method of supervised support for prisoners as they reenter their communities to a management tool that classifies and isolates offenders as they reenter society.***

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Pennsylvania Parole Board instituted the New Technical Parole Violator Management Program after the board found that reincarcerations of TPVs had increased 37% from 2000 to 2006 (Tate & McVey, 2007).

The use of graduated sanctions has to be developed with a great deal of care and collaboration among the various agencies responsible for the parolee's return to society. Burke noted that a number of states do not have a coherent and cohesive system of graduated sanctions. Moreover, graduated sanctions are often used in an inconsistent manner, with parole officers dispensing sanctions in a nonstandardized way.

Burke and colleagues (2007) studied the ways in which various states responded to TPVs. Her analysis of states' practices led her to categorize three main approaches:

- Unstructured;
- Prescriptive; and
- Strategic.

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**The Unstructured Approach.** The unstructured approach has been the most common response to TPVs, and a parole board that tends to use an unstructured approach to TPVs is likely to be characterized by:

- A lack of standardization, i.e., an absence of a clear policy or specific criteria about how the officers should respond to or prevent TPVs;
- Little to no training in the use of objective risk assessment instruments; and
- Little to no training in the principles of evidence-based practices (EBPs).

This lack of standardization results in a wide range of responses to TPVs because supervisors and officers have no clear guidelines to follow. Parolees who commit a technical parole violation may receive a verbal warning, a sanction, or be reincarcerated, depending on the district, parole officer, or parole supervisor (Burke, 2007). These inconsistent responses to a TPV may even vary from one officer to another within the same district. This lack of standardization likely leads to the highest number of reincarcerations for TPVs.

**The Prescriptive Approach.** At the other end of the TPV response spectrum is the prescriptive approach (Burke et al., 2007). States that use this method permit the parole officer to have little to no discretion in handling TPVs. Often states with the prescriptive model have enacted laws or regulations that rigidly prescribe responses to TPVs. This approach leads to problems with public safety because officers do not have the discretion to reincarcerate high-risk offenders even when these individuals exhibit behaviors that place the public at imminent risk. Depending on the rigid response structure of this approach, parole officers may have to wait until offenders commit new offenses before they can be reincarcerated. The rigidity of this approach robs parole officers of any discretion in terms of using graduated sanctions and prevents them from using their experience and training in making decisions about TPVs. Noncompliance with certain stipulations will not result in reincarceration, and parolees use their knowledge to repeatedly disregard these stipulations.

**The Strategic Approach.** The strategic approach to TPVs flows from clearly structured policies and procedures that

reflect the current research findings on recidivism. In this approach, officers practice discretion in responding to TPVs based on the offender's current risk level and criminogenic needs. Discretion is practiced within a larger system of graduated sanctions that are available to the officers. Using the strategic approach, a parole officer decides how to handle a parolee's technical parole violation after reviewing the parolee's:

- Risk level from a validated risk/needs assessment instrument;
- Overall compliance with parole; and
- Compliance within the clearly defined goals and policies of the agency (Solomon et al., 2008).

Officers using a strategic approach make decisions about a TPV by taking into account the context of the parolee's current environment. States that have piloted the strategic approach have reduced TPV prison admissions without compromising public safety (Burke et al., 2007).

### Planning and Implementing Graduated Sanctions in the New Jersey Parole System

In 2003, the New Jersey State Parole Board decided to adopt a policy that would discourage the return of technical violators to prison. The board developed a method of graduated sanctions to deal with TPVs. It revised its policy, procedures, and mission to reflect this change from what has become primarily a supervision model to a supervision and treatment model. Parole supervisors and front-line officers were shown how to implement the new system of structured discretion in dealing with TPVs.

As part of the plan to institute graduated sanctions, parole officers and supervisors were trained in the administration and interpretation of the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), a static and dynamic assessment tool (Andrews & Bonta, 1995). New Jersey Parole developed a mapping/matrix system so that parole officers can review the graduated sanctions when a technical parole violation has occurred. The officers were trained to use supervision and treatment methods while taking into account the parolee's current risk/needs level.

New Jersey's parole board structured the system of graduated sanctions along a continuum ranging from least restrictive to most restrictive. In addition, a broad

array of options for responding to TPVs were made available, including:

- An individual review of the parolee's progress or negative behavior;
- A meeting with the parole officer and the parole officer's supervisor to review the infraction with the parolee;
- Increased field supervision and home visits; and
- Referrals to outpatient centers and day reporting centers, electronic monitoring, and pre-paid outpatient programs (e.g., a parolee with a positive drug test would initiate a referral for substance abuse treatment ranging from outpatient services to residential programs).

As part of the graduated sanctions compendium, parole officers have the possibility of placing parole violators in residential treatment centers that have been referred to as "halfway back" programs. These residential programs represent a higher level of supervision than treatment in the community.

After four years of using a structured discretion method to graduated sanctions, the New Jersey Parole Board conducted a review of the method's effectiveness in reducing reincarceration due to TPVs. The board wanted also to ensure that public safety was enhanced by using this method. The board found that there was a significant reduction in prison readmissions for TPVs, and that there was no increase in recidivism. For example, in 1999, 5,400 TPVs in New Jersey were returned to prison. By 2004 (one year after the institution of graduated sanctions), that figure dropped to fewer than 2,900 (Ward, 2008).

Given the positive results from the graduated sanctions approach, the parole board decided to develop a program that would add another layer in the graduated sanctions continuum to further reduce prison readmissions for TPVs.

### RAC Development

In 2007, the parole board developed plans for a pilot project of Regional Assessment Centers (RACs). The RACs were envisioned as secure residential treatment facilities that would assess and treat parole violators over a 14- to 28-day timeframe. The board decided that parole violators who committed a new offense would not qualify for the RAC program

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but that any TPV could be considered for RAC placement. A typical referral to RAC might have had the following violations that, in the past, would have returned a parolee to jail:

- Absconding from a “halfway back” program;
- Not attending parole meetings; and
- Being discharged from a “halfway back” program for disciplinary reasons.

Parole violators charged with a new offense were deemed ineligible for RAC program participation.

### RAC Implementation

In order to successfully implement the RAC program, a number of factors had to be addressed. For example, a secure facility had to be designated that could house, assess, and treat the RAC residents. The parole board sent out a notice of available funds to initiate the RAC. The parole board evaluated the responses to the notice and decided to award the contract to Community Education Centers (CEC), a private correctional treatment company that partners with public entities. In July 2008, the parole board, in collaboration with CEC, established an RAC program prototype.

#### The New Jersey Parole Board System.

In order for the reader to understand how the RAC pilot was implemented, a description of the New Jersey Parole Board system is important. The New Jersey Parole Board staff consists of administrative and law enforcement personnel. For the RAC project to succeed, both branches of the parole board needed to support the endeavor. The support of the law enforcement arm of the board, the Division of Parole, was critical to the initiation and continuation of the RAC program because the parole officers are “on the ground” and supervise parolees to ensure that they comply with the parole board stipulations. The parole officers are responsible for initiating the revocation process after review of any violations of the conditions of parole.

Although the administrative personnel had been responsible for the planning and organization of the RAC project, it was the parole officers who would actually identify and transport the TPVs to the RAC facility. If the law enforcement staff were only superficially supportive of the RAC project, it was unlikely to be successful.

After the contract was awarded, parole administrators scheduled a series of planning meetings between parole staff and CEC staff. These meetings were critical in terms of initiating and sustaining the actual RAC project. The initial meetings included tours of the RAC unit by the law enforcement unit of the parole staff. The parole officers’ questions, concerns, and suggestions were solicited during these early meetings. All stakeholders were involved in both the planning and implementation stages of the RAC project.

**The CEC Pilot Project.** In August 2008, the parole board and CEC staff designated a North Jersey CEC site as the location for the pilot project. The parole board assigned two parole officers to the RAC unit. The RAC unit officers’ duties include:

- Meeting with the new RAC resident;
- Providing the RAC resident’s official file within two to three days of his arrival; and
- Processing the paperwork necessary for the revocation hearing.

In addition, the RAC officers have picked up RAC residents from county jails and residential programs.

Experience with having the officers stationed on the unit has illustrated how vital they are to the unit’s day-to-day operation. These officers support the mission of the unit through their words and actions. For example, new RAC residents are often agitated and present with a defeatist attitude, asking to be revoked rather than go through the RAC process, because they “are going to be revoked at [their] hearing anyway.” The officers speak to the residents in a clear and consistent manner about their options, including the possibility that they will be revoked. After speaking to the officer, the new residents usually become less agitated and “settle” into the unit. The officers also intervene with the residents, deescalating potentially volatile situations before they become major incidents.

**A United Front.** RAC residents perceive that the parole officers and the CEC staff are working together as a team. If the residents were to observe any conflict between the two entities, it is likely that they would capitalize on the schism. When dealing with this subpopulation of offenders, it is relevant to remember that these individuals have, more than likely, seriously and repeatedly violated

their parole stipulations. These offenders require a firm and structured approach, with all staff members presenting as a united front with a consistent message.

After the official opening of the RAC program, parole staff and CEC staff have continued their weekly meetings to review any concerns, successes, and suggestions to improve services. These weekly meetings have been critical to the success of the RAC program. Problems have been addressed immediately, to the satisfaction of the parole staff and the CEC staff alike. The continual flow of communication has resolved problems as they have arisen, rather than letting them fester and infect the system. It cannot be stated in strong enough language that these weekly meetings have ameliorated minor problems before they have morphed into problems that would have threatened the integrity and the very existence of the fledgling operation.

### RAC Procedures

Following the principles of EBP, RAC residents are evaluated by an objective risk/needs assessment instrument (LSI-R) to determine their current risk level, criminogenic needs, and responsivity factors. The RAC staff also utilize use a broad-based personality inventory (the Personality Assessment Inventory [PAI]) to assess the offender’s current psychiatric functioning, including his violence potential, substance abuse problems, motivation for treatment, and suicide potential. In addition, a stand-alone substance abuse screening instrument (the Texas Christian University Drug Screen-II [TCUDS II]) is used to assess the offenders’ current substance abuse treatment needs.

In addition to the above-cited instruments, the assessment staff conduct a comprehensive biopsychosocial interview along with a full review of the offender’s official file. The interview includes questions about the resident’s strengths and protective factors.

After a database has been developed of the resident’s current risk levels, criminogenic needs, and responsivity factors, the assessment counselor generates an assessment report. The report includes:

- A summary of the test findings;
- A review of the official file;
- Behavioral observations during the interview;

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- Compliance with the RAC procedures; and
- Any other relevant data.

The report also provides a series of treatment recommendations to address the resident's current risk level and treatment needs. The report is supplied to the parole hearing officer at the time of the revocation hearing. As part of the procedure, feedback about the assessment results is provided to the resident.

During the revocation hearing, the resident has an opportunity to provide information to the hearing officer about his current situation. After review of the data, the hearing officer makes a recommendation to the parole board as to whether or not the resident should continue on parole with suggested programming or have his parole revoked. The resident's assessment summary is transferred with the resident to his next placement so as to provide a seamless transfer of his current treatment needs.

### RAC Statistics

There were 178 RAC revocation hearings as of January 7, 2009. As Table 1 indicates, the figures for residents returned to prison are 4% higher than for residents continued on parole. However, the reader may want to compare these statistics with the traditional New Jersey revocation hearings rate of reincarceration, which stands at 80% (Ward, 2008). It should also be noted that before the RAC program's inception, all of these residents would have been housed in jails waiting for their revocation hearings. By definition, all of the RAC residents constitute a very high risk category because they have already violated parole and exhausted the current range of graduated sanctions. These statistics provide objective data that the RAC program has successfully lowered reincarceration figures for serious TPVs during the first five months of operation

Result	Number	Percent
Reincarcerated	83	47%
Continued on parole	76	43%
Pending	19	10%

for the northern New Jersey site and during the first three months of operation for the central/southern New Jersey site.

### Two Case Examples

This section describes two RAC cases. The case information is a compilation of several RAC residents' histories so as to preserve the anonymity of the residents.

**The Case of Mr. M.** The first RAC case is Mr. M., a male in his early 30s who was placed in RAC after he was picked up by the Parole Fugitive Unit. Mr. M. has an extensive criminal and psychiatric history. The circumstances behind his absconding were the following: Mr. M. had been placed in a mandated residential treatment center for violating his parole after repeatedly testing positive for alcohol and marijuana. During a recreation period at the residential center, Mr. M. was viewing a TV show about the Iraq War. After seeing soldiers being shot and injured in a news report, he decided that it was his patriotic duty to enlist in the military and go to Iraq. At the end of the news report, Mr. M. located the nearest Marine recruiting center by perusing the telephone book. He then kicked out an emergency exit door and traveled to the nearest recruiting center.

During his meeting with the recruiter, he was informed that he was ineligible for the military due to his criminal record and his psychiatric history. While speaking with the recruiter, Mr. M. revealed that he had absconded from a facility to "do my patriotic duty and help the boys over there." He also told the recruiter that he was returning to his hometown to "get a haircut and a drink." As he was leaving the barbershop, the Fugitive Unit picked him up and sent him to the RAC unit. Mr. M. described his capture in the following manner:

I was walking out of Sal's (the barbershop) and they swarmed all over me with guns drawn. You woulda thought I was a serial killer or something.

It is likely that the recruiter called the authorities after Mr. M. left his office.

During his assessment interview, Mr. M. cried as he discussed his desire to serve in the military and his frustration at being denied enlistment by the recruiting officer. When he was asked about his recent psychiatric treatment, he reported that he had taken himself off his psychotropic medication approximately one month before

he left the residential facility. When asked why he had discontinued his medication, he replied, "I didn't need them anymore. I felt fine. Actually, I felt great!"

A review of Mr. M.'s official folder indicated that he had been diagnosed with several serious psychiatric disorders, including bipolar disorder. Two psychological reports indicated that Mr. M. might be malingering or faking his psychiatric symptoms; the current RAC evaluation suggested otherwise.

Mr. M.'s LSI-R evaluation found that his overall risk-for-recidivism score was in the high-risk range, with concerns noted in the following domains:

- Accommodations (Mr. M. was homeless);
- Criminal history;
- Emotional/personal;
- Substance abuse;
- Finances;
- Education/employment; and
- Family/marital.

Mr. M.'s personality testing results on the PAI were significant in a number of domains, including antisocial, mania, schizophrenia, and alcohol scales.

Mr. M.'s RAC assessment summary recommendations included:

- Assignment to a facility that treated offenders with mental health and substance abuse problems;
- Referral to housing services; and
- Referral to a disability center that included vocational training for individuals with his impairments.

The revocation hearing officer concurred with the assessment summary recommendations. The officer did not recommend that Mr. M. be returned to custody.

After reviewing the revocation officer's recommendations, the parole board decided to continue Mr. M. on parole, with the stipulation that he complete a treatment program for dually diagnosed individuals. Mr. M. was subsequently transferred to a residential treatment program for dually diagnosed offenders. On follow-up, Mr. M. has been in residential placement for the past three months. He has also been prescribed and has cooperated with a regimen of psychotropic medication to stabilize his mood swings.

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Before the RAC program's institution, Mr. M. would have been placed in a county jail awaiting his revocation hearing. He would have, more than likely, had his parole revoked and been returned to state prison to serve the rest of his sentence. In prison, it is also likely that Mr. M. would not have received the level of substance abuse and mental health treatment that is currently being provided to him. When he was incarcerated, Mr. M. reported that he was a frequent target of other prisoners who routinely intimidated and assaulted him due to vulnerabilities associated with his psychiatric problems. His current placement has minimized the reoccurrence of his victimization by other inmates.

**The Case of Mr. T.** Mr. T., the second RAC case, is a male in his mid-20s who was placed in the RAC program after absconding from a mandated residential treatment program. Mr. T. absconded from the program after allegedly being threatened by another resident who was a known gang member. After being missing for 10 days, Mr. T. turned himself in to his parole officer. When the officer administered a substance abuse test to Mr. T., it came up positive for opiates. Mr. T. admitted to his parole officer that he had used heroin and alcohol while he was on his 10-day excursion.

A review of Mr. T.'s folder indicated that he had an extensive juvenile and adult criminal history, with a distinct pattern of charges for drug distribution and theft that were related to his heroin dependence. Unlike Mr. M., Mr. T. did not have a history of serious psychiatric disorders.

When Mr. T. arrived at the RAC program, he asked the RAC parole officer to return him to jail because, he stated:

I been through these programs before. I'm just gonna go out and use. I might as well kill my number [max out from his current sentence] in prison.

After giving Mr. T. a day to become acclimated to the RAC program, a RAC parole officer and CEC staff member met with him to review his options. He was informed that his parole status might very well be revoked by the parole board, but he was also told that there were other possible outcomes to his hearing, including placement in a residential program. After considering his options, Mr. T.

decided to wait for the outcome of his hearing.

Mr. T.'s initial reaction to being placed in the RAC program is a common response during the initial 24 to 48 hours of placement. The RAC staff have developed a procedure to orient offenders to the program and review their options with them. The inclusion of the RAC parole officer in the process has played a critical role.

Mr. T.'s LSI-R results indicated that his overall risk-for-recidivism score was in the high-risk range, with very high elevations in the following domains:

- Criminal history;
- Substance abuse; and
- Education/employment (Mr. T. had no history of ever holding a legitimate job).

Mr. T.'s personality testing results found elevations in the following scales:

- Antisocial;
- Drug problems; and
- Alcohol problems.

The RAC assessment summary included the following recommendations:

- Intensive substance abuse treatment;
- Pre-GED classes; and
- Vocational training.

The revocation hearing officer recommended to the parole board that Mr. T. be continued on parole and placed in an intensive substance abuse residential treatment program. The parole board decided to follow the hearing officer's recommendations, and Mr. T. was subsequently placed in an intensive substance abuse treatment program. On follow-up, Mr. T. has continued in his residential program for the past two months.

Similar to Mr. M.'s probable fate, Mr. T. would have been placed in a county jail awaiting his revocation hearing if the RAC program had not been available. He would, more than likely, have had his parole revoked and been returned to state prison to serve out the rest of his sentence. It is also likely that Mr. T. would not have received the level of substance abuse treatment that is currently being provided to him.

Both cases illustrate the utility of the RAC program as another layer of graduated sanctions before the board decides whether or not to reincarcerate the parole violator. As these cases illustrate, the RAC process provides current information about the parolee's risk/needs factors so that the revocation hearing officer and,

ultimately, the parole board, can make an informed decision. Parolees who are too high-risk for community-based supervision are returned to incarceration to serve out their sentences.

### Summary and Conclusions

States have been struggling for decades about how to deal with TPVs. During the past 30 years, state parole boards have moved away from providing supervision reentry support to focusing solely on monitoring and supervising parolees. This supervision-only model of parole has resulted in the isolation of parolees and the creation of obstacles to their reentry into society. Moreover, some research indicates that the supervision-only model of parole may actually increase the risk for recidivism (Aos et al., 2006). Indeed, recidivism rates during this period have dramatically increased in many states, with a significant subpopulation of prisoners being reincarcerated for TPVs. For many states, TPVs constitute 30% to 50% of annual reincarcerations. In response to the incarceration crisis, some states have instituted a system of graduated sanctions to reduce TPV reincarceration while maintaining public safety standards.

Since 2003, New Jersey has moved from the standard supervision model to a system of treatment and supervision. A continuum of graduated sanctions to TPVs has been developed, with options ranging from the least restrictive to the most restrictive environments. The way in which the parole officer responds to a TPV depends on a number of factors, including the offender's risk-for-recidivism level, the severity of the infraction, and the officer's structured discretion.

In 2007, the New Jersey Parole Board expanded the continuum of graduated sanctions to include a secure residential treatment center whose staff evaluate the highest risk residents to make recommendations that are evidence-based. These parole violators would have been reincarcerated in the past.

In 2008, two RAC Centers opened in New Jersey, one in the northern part of the state and the other in the central/southern section. By the end of 2008, these RAC facilities were fully operational. Residents have been referred to the RAC program in ever increasing numbers as more and more parole officers use the RAC program.

*See REGIONAL ASSESSMENT, next page*

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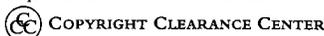
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The RAC program has continued to serve as another layer in the continuum of graduated sanctions. Although there are always going to be high-risk parole violators who should be reincarcerated, and many RAC residents have their parole revoked, the RAC provides an opportunity for the parole board to review parolees who have committed a serious technical parole violation without resorting solely to reincarceration.

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