

Strategic Plan 2011

The New York City Model of Probation



Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Vincent N. Schiraldi
Commissioner

Message from the Commissioner



I am pleased to present the New York City Department of Probation Strategic Plan 2011. When Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg asked me to join his administration, he told me that reducing crime requires tough law enforcement and smart, aggressive policing, but it also means ensuring that those who've been arrested and sentenced to probation don't get into trouble again.

In order to achieve the Mayor's vision, my senior staff and I needed to learn exactly what we do well and where we need to make improvements. Soon after I started at DOP in February 2010, we began meeting with frontline staff, middle managers, executive staff, community providers, advocates, city agencies and our probation clients. We also conducted 20 focus groups and administered a survey to our entire staff, which received a remarkable response rate of 60%. The meetings were tremendously productive. Not only did I learn a lot about our agency, but also I was consistently impressed by our knowledgeable and committed staff.

The feedback we received from staff formed the foundation of a two-day retreat I organized with my senior team. Over the course of many wide-ranging and thoughtful discussions, we began designing a blueprint for change.

Our plan is organized around five key goals:

- Safer Communities
- Opportunities, Resources and Services
- Organizational Excellence
- Strong Partnerships and Community Engagement
- Measuring Success

The goals, strategies and activities we outline in this document represent a combination of evidence-informed best practices and innovative, home-grown ideas that we call the New York City Model of Probation. It is a model that embodies the ideals that make our City great—innovative thinking, cooperation, optimism, and mutual respect. A detailed work plan will guide coordinated implementation of these critical efforts. Transforming these ideals into programs, opportunities and services to improve outcomes will not be easy, but I have no doubt we are up to the task.

Vincent N. Schiraldi
Commissioner

Mission

The New York City Department of Probation helps build stronger and safer communities by supervising people on probation and fostering opportunities for them to move out of the criminal justice system through meaningful education, employment, health services, family engagement and community participation.

Vision

The New York City Department of Probation advances public safety by partnering with government agencies, community organizations and residents, with a focus on neighborhoods where large numbers of people on probation live. Together we will:

- Develop a citywide network of quality opportunities, resources and services that builds on the strengths of people on probation and reduces their involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Match individuals to appropriate probation supervision and support services based on their needs, interests and risk to public safety.
- Reward people under supervision with incentives when they do right by themselves and their communities.
- Expand services for court-involved youth and adults in the communities where they live.
- Empower staff by integrating them into decision-making processes, recognizing their achievements, rewarding positive change and providing the information and training needed to implement our ambitious priorities.

The New York City Model of Probation

Goal 1: Safer Communities

Strategy 1 - Target Resources to High-Risk Probationers

Strategy 2 - Create and Rapidly Administer a Continuum of Graduated Responses

Goal 2: Opportunities, Resources and Services

Strategy 3 - Establish City-Wide Network of 'Opportunity Hubs'

Strategy 4 - Prioritize Education, Work and Strength-Based Development

Strategy 5 - Realign Juvenile Justice Services

Strategy 6 - Broker Opportunities and Eliminate Barriers to Success

Goal 3: Organizational Excellence

Strategy 7 - Embrace Organizational Culture of Client Success

Strategy 8 - Strengthen Professional Development

Strategy 9 - Adopt Best Management Practices

Goal 4: Strong Partnerships and Community Engagement

Strategy 10 - Establish Partnerships with Communities

Strategy 11 - Collaborate with City, State and National Partners

Strategy 12 - Build Broad Support for Our Priorities

Goal 5: Measuring Success

Strategy 13 - Streamline Data Collection and Improve Analysis Capacity

Strategy 14 - Promote Accountability

Goal 1: Safer Communities



Advancing public safety and reducing recidivism in New York City's neighborhoods

Our highest priority is to advance public safety and reduce recidivism in all New York City neighborhoods. We can best achieve this goal by concentrating our resources on probation clients who pose the greatest risk to public safety, while reducing required contact with individuals who pose a low risk to public safety and/or have a proven record of success.

Our two core strategies for achieving this goal are 1) focus on high-risk clients through programs and practices with proven rehabilitative results and 2) create a continuum of actions that recognize positive behavior and impose quick and certain graduated responses for violating the conditions of probation.

By targeting resources to high-risk probationers we will:

- Reduce re-arrests;
- Reduce failures to report;
- Reduce unnecessary violations of probation;
- Reduce intensity and frequency of supervision when appropriate;
- Increase early discharges for people on probation who maintain a record of success;
- Avoid unnecessary incarceration.

The continuum of swiftly administered graduated responses will include:

- Individualized and transparent probation contracts with specific goals and conditions that match the interests, needs and risks of each probation client;
- Partnerships with law enforcement and community organizations to enhance supervision and the prospect of rehabilitation;
- Case management tools to track and respond to milestones and setbacks for probation clients;
- Assessment tools that reflect client assets, interests and validated risks to public safety.

Goal 2: Opportunities, Resources and Services

Establishing a citywide Opportunity Network that maximizes access to resources and services



People on probation are more likely to be successful if they have access to a wide range of opportunities that build on their strengths, needs and interests. Our central strategy for achieving this goal is establishing a citywide Justice Reinvestment Opportunity Network comprised of community-based hubs that maximize access to resources and services.

Opportunity Hubs in communities with large numbers of residents on probation will emphasize:

- Access to age-appropriate education, employment, housing, healthcare, benefits, family engagement and community service;
- Department staff and resources co-located with other public, non-profit and community-based organizations;
- The strengths and assets of clients, their families and neighborhoods.

For young people on probation, we will use proven practices that:

- When appropriate, will prevent young people from being confined in distant, state facilities;
- Serve them closer to the communities where they live ranging from school- and community-based to residential programs;
- Develop individual achievement plans with youth and their families;
- Dramatically expand youth development opportunities;
- Improve engagement with educational opportunities;
- Foster mentoring relationships between young clients, their probation officers and positive adult role models.

To help eliminate barriers to success we will:

- Provide clear guidelines for successfully completing probation;
- Create opportunities for meaningful community service and civic engagement;
- Partner with organizations that link people to education and work in growth industries;
- Facilitate access to existing benefits;
- Remove legal restrictions to ease the path to rehabilitation.

Goal 3: Organizational Excellence

Achieving client success through a highly-skilled professional staff, proven practices and strong partnerships



As a state of the art agency, the Department of Probation sets the national standard for achieving probation client success through a highly-skilled professional staff, proven practices and strong partnerships. Fulfilling this goal requires the coordinated efforts of all staff.

We embrace an organizational culture that promotes client success by:

- Adopting supervision practices that are grounded in personal growth;
- Upgrading facilities to include more resources for staff and clients;
- Ensuring that our organizational structure meets our needs;
- Evaluating and improving promotion policies;
- Recognizing staff and client achievements.

We strengthen staff skills by continually providing training and education that:

- Incorporate best and proven practices;
- Integrate youth development work into family court services;
- Share relevant knowledge and research.

We adopt proven management practices that:

- Communicate clear expectations;
- Use sophisticated management information systems;
- Encourage staff and client participation in department decision-making;
- Respond to employee and client suggestions.

Goal 4: Strong Partnerships and Community Engagement



Building strong positive connections to the communities where people on probation live

Probation clients are more likely to succeed when they have strong, positive connections to the communities where they live. By working with partners to provide a continuum of opportunities, we can help build safer, healthier and more sustainable communities.

We will establish partnerships with the communities we serve by:

- Co-locating staff in communities where large numbers of people on probation live;
- Inviting stakeholders and residents to collaborate on projects and programs;
- Better engaging victims of crime;
- Coordinating with opportunity hubs to leverage existing community assets;
- Empowering clients to participate in civic activities that improve their communities.

We will collaborate with city, county, state and national partners by:

- Identifying, working with and learning from strategic partners;
- Participating in and facilitating cross-sector work groups that focus on multi-dimensional issues that affect probation clients.

We will build broad support for our priorities through:

- Public forums;
- Media outreach;
- A website that provides useful information for people on probation, service providers, strategic partners and the public.

Goal 5: Measuring Success

Better assessing progress, testing new innovations and demonstrating what works



Our staff and our clients are accountable for positive outcomes. New performance measures better assess progress, test new innovations and demonstrate what works.

To improve internal analysis capacity we will:

- Streamline data collection and adopt new technologies to share information across our offices and with our partners;
- Establish working partnerships with researchers.

To promote accountability for clients and staff we will:

- Define and rigorously use specific and relevant data to drive decision making;
- Establish incentives that encourage positive results;
- Reduce risk to public safety by adopting an evidence-based, validated risk assessment instrument to guide decision-making.



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