

# Effective supervision of offenders

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# AIMS OF PRESENTATION

- To summarize the key principles of effective one to one supervision of offenders on community based orders
- To review Australian research on effective supervision
- Identify the controversies/uncertainty about what works
- To demonstrate the difference between effective and ineffective supervision

**Nothing work to some  
things work and some  
don't**

# EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO PROBATION/CORRECTIONS SUPERVISION

1. Target high risk offenders
2. Help the client to understand the role of the probation officer and what is expected of the probationer
3. Provide offenders with pro-social models, positive reinforcement for pro-social expressions and actions and appropriate challenging of pro-criminal expressions and actions
4. The provision of problem solving and CBT processes which help offenders address their offence related needs
5. The development of an appropriate client/worker relationship

## PROGRAMS OR APPROACHES WHICH THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS DO NOT WORK

1. Provision of intensive services to low risk offenders
2. Provision of anti-social models or rewards for anti-social behaviour
3. Supervision which is based on empathy and the relationship alone and programs based solely on the development of insight
4. Programs or supervision which focuses on punishment and threats including the provision of tougher penalties eg curfews - programs focussing on berating, blaming and judging offenders
5. Programs which attempt to scare offenders into being law abiding eg scared straight programs

## Reference

- C Trotter (2006) *Working with Involuntary Clients* Sage

# Trotter 1996

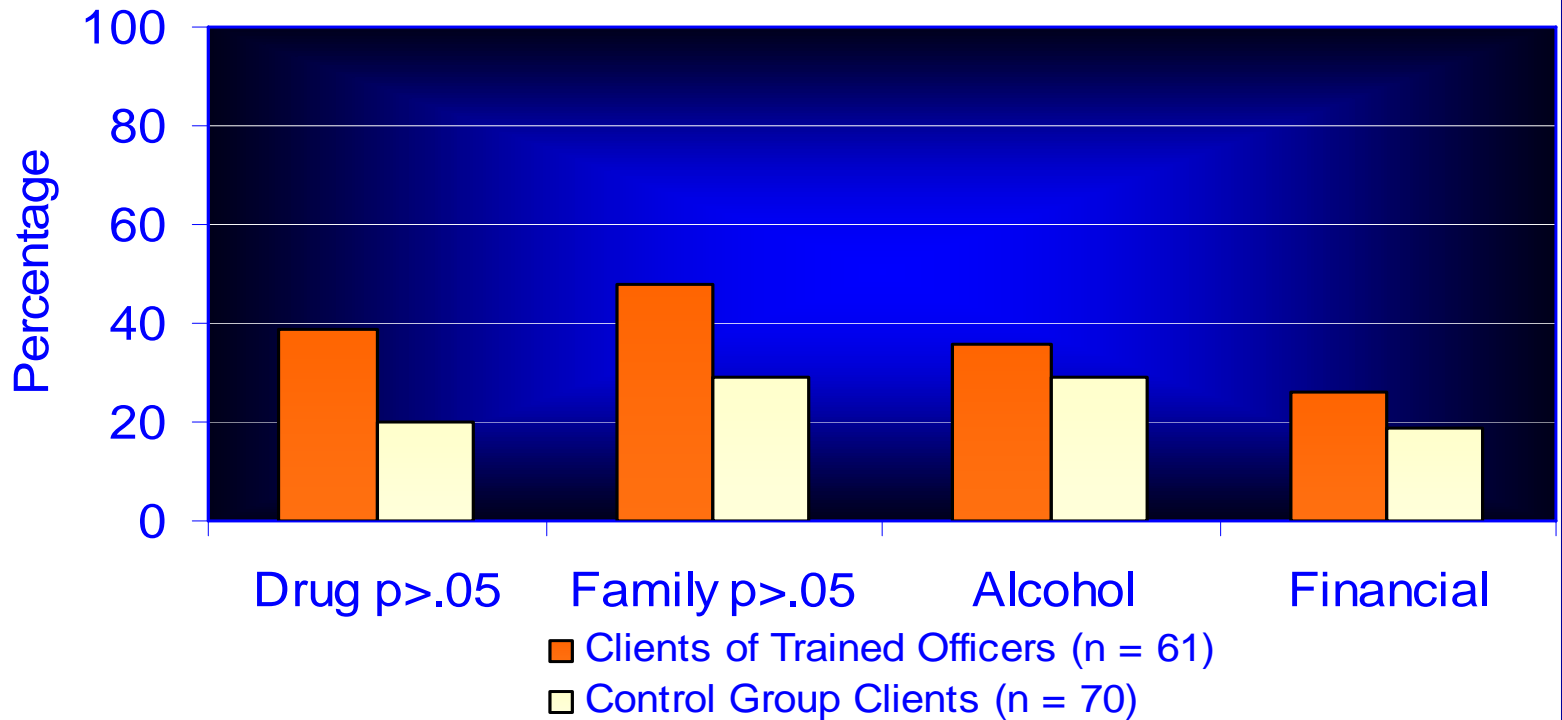
- Provided training in pro-social modelling and other skills to 12 probation and parole officers
- Compared 105 clients of those trained to 105 randomly selected clients of other Pos
- Examined file notes to see if trained workers used more skills
- Interviewed offenders in both groups to examine if they found the trained workers more helpful
- Examined compliance and re-offending after 1 and 4 years



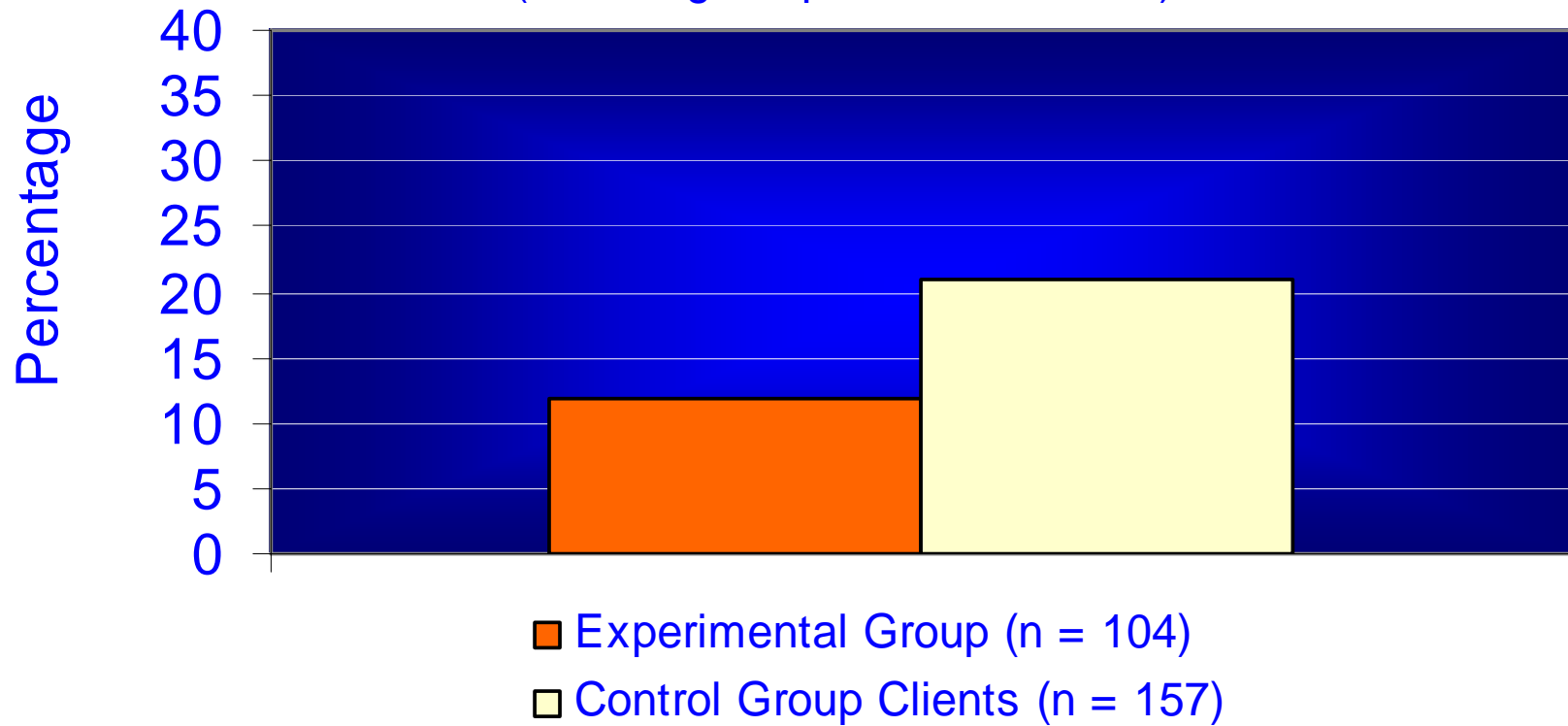
# Use of practice skills in file notes trained and control groups

	Trained (104)	Not trained (157)
■ Scored 5+	44%	16%

### 'What problems have been reduced?'



Imprisoned for a Breach committed within one year  
(including suspended sentence)



# Child Protection Study – Trotter 2004

- 380 child protection clients
- 50 workers
- Examined skills of workers by interviews with clients and workers
- When skills present – higher client satisfaction, higher worker satisfaction, fewer children removed, cases closed earlier,

# Trotter, McIvor, Sheehan (2012)

- Tracked 140 women after prison in Victoria
- Asked women about their community support workers
- Lower re-offending if women felt that the worker
  - understood and collaboratively worked with them (relationship),
  - worked with all of their problems (problem solving)
  - encouraged the women and believed that they could change (pro-social re-inforcement and relationship),
  - did what they said they would do (pro-social modelling)
  - clear about purpose (role clarification).

# Analysis of interviews between corrections staff and clients (Trotter in press)

- Research Officer observed 119 interviews between youth probation officers and offenders
- Coded use of skills by probation officers using a coding manual
- Parallel projects in Canada and UK observing interviews and using similar coding manuals

# Coding manual

# Role Clarification

- **Conditions of the young person's Order:** Worker helps offender to understand the conditions of the young person's current legal order.
- **Nature and authority of the worker:** The worker helps the offender understand their role and how it may be used (i.e. If the young person misses appointments). To score 5 on this item the worker engages the young person in this discussion providing a number of examples about how their role works in practice and the limits of their role.
- **Purpose of the worker's interventions:** Score this item as present if the worker articulates why they are intervening with the young person.
- occur.
- **Negotiable and non-negotiable areas:** The worker is clear about areas that are negotiable with the young person (i.e. time and day of the appointment) and areas that are non-negotiable (i.e. frequency of supervision).



# Problem solving

- **Problem identification:** The worker and the young person talk about a range of problems the young person might be facing. To score present [5] the problems identified must be generated from the young person's perspective.
- **Setting goals:** There is an agreement on goals, goals are clearly defined using and understood by both worker and young person.
- **Developing strategies:** Discussions of various courses of action that may be taken and evaluating which steps are the most likely to succeed. This may include formal or informal cognitive behavioral strategies aimed to help clients change their way of thinking about crime.

# Pro-Social Modeling and Reinforcement

- **Pro-social actions and comments:** Score this item as present [5] if the worker comments on and promotes the young person's pro-social actions or remarks.
- **Rewarding and encouraging:** Score this item as present [5] if the worker moves beyond identifying the young person's pro-social beliefs/values and provides positive reinforcement for these actions/beliefs displayed by the young person.
- **Identifying and challenging:** Score this item as present [5] if the worker comments on the young person's rationalisations for offending or other pro-criminal actions or comments and respectfully challenges them about these behaviours/beliefs.

# Relationship

- **Open and honest:** Score this item as present if the worker appears to be honest with the young person
- **Non-blaming:** Score this item as present if the worker explores the young person's circumstances/issues with them. The worker does not inadvertently or directly attribute blame to the young person or their current or previous circumstances.
- **Optimistic:** Score this item as present if the worker conveys optimism that the offender can change

# Global Score

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The worker did not utilize any of the effective practice principles;</li></ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The worker used minimal effective practice skills;</li></ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The interview showed some use of the effective practice principles;</li></ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The worker used several of the effective practice principles in a deliberate manner;;</li></ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The worker deliberately the effective practice principles in an efficient and successful manner.</li></ul>

# Offender 2 yr completion rates

Completed (GS 5 or more) 6/32 19%

Completed (GS less than 5 ) 31/85 36.5%

<.05

# Offender risk

- Skills more likely to be used with low risk offenders, however, after taking account of risk there was still a statistically significant relationship between use of skills and offences by probationers

# Similar outcomes in two other studies

# Bourgeon et al 2010 ' /

	Pre Training	Post Training
■ Trained with Clinical Support	41%	15%
■ Trained low Clinical Support	33%	24%
■ Control (no training)	34%	33%



# Failure rates for moderate and high-risk clients (Robinson et al 2012)

	Pre-training	Post-training
■ Trained Supervisors	75/446 (39%)	78/295(26%)
■ Control Group	130/345 (38%)	75/218(34%)

# Coding for skills (Trotter in press)

- High levels of reliability
- Correlation on the overall global skill score between first and second coders (from tapes was .741 (sig .000))
- Requires some practice
- An example

# Global Score

1

- The worker did not utilize any of the effective practice principles;

3

- The worker used minimal effective practice skills, almost unintentionally;

5

- The interview showed some use of the effective practice principles;

7

- The worker used several of the effective practice principles in a deliberate manner;;

10

- The worker deliberately the effective practice principles in an efficient and successful manner.

# Interview 1 - score 3

- Interview focused on problem solving, challenges comments about not harming people BUT
- Worker decided what problems are – no agreement on the main problem or goals
- Ignores her wish to focus on work, her concerns about accommodation and money and decides she must deal with drugs issue
- Does not re-inforce her pro-social comments – finding work, concern about finishing order

# Interview 2

- Pro-social re-inforcement – on time to appt
- Talks about his role – what he is trying to do
- Asks her about her concerns – identifies issues from her perspective
- Challenges rationalisations – boyfriends offences
- Encourages her to identify drugs as an issue rather than telling her
- One criticism – may have encouraged contact with boyfriend which be a pro-criminal influence

# What can we be sure of – pro-social modelling

- Identify pro-social – e.g. Victim empathy
- Reward pro-social - praise
- Challenge pro-criminal in a respectful and non blaming way

# Pro-social modelling – does your worker return your phone calls?

	Returned calls	Not returned
■ Progressed	61%	38%
■ Good outcome	62%	35%
■ Case closed	70%	47%
■ Child removed	11%	17%

# What can we be sure of?

- Helping offenders with their offence related needs – peer group, work/school, accommodation, family



# What is less clear - Risk

- Many studies have found that intensive services given to high risk offenders lead to lower recidivism but intensive services to low risk may lead to increased recidivism
- My studies found that high risk and low risk offenders benefit equally from quality supervision
- It seems that low risk offenders may be harmed by poor quality supervision
- High risk offenders less likely to be harmed by poor quality supervision

# Relationship

- Non blaming, collaborative approaches are associated with good outcomes
- However disengaged clients were influenced by quality of supervision in the same way as engaged clients
- Good skills important whether the offenders were engaged or not
- If workers use skills it does not seem necessary to have as close relationship<sup>34</sup>

# Working with the offender's view of the problem

- My studies – collaboration, work with offenders' view of the problems and encourage offenders to work on problems which are offence related
- Research by others suggests that this is not so important and that the worker can determine criminogenic needs

# CBT

- Bourgeon study – CBT most important
- My studies – non blaming and rewarding pro-social comments and actions most important



"I know you are doing well and complying with the conditions but I need to see you more often anyway because you have still got problems."

“Because you have been keeping your appointments and doing your community work you will have to report monthly from now on.”

"The police seem to having a go at a lot of my clients lately. They never leave you alone do they?"



“It must be frustrating if you feel that the police are really out to get you. I think most police are really just doing their job. Is there some way that you can change what you are doing so that they are less interested in you?”

“It is good that you went for the interview – but with the unemployment situation the way it is you can’t expect too much can you?”

- “That is great that you went for the employment interview and that you have kept the appointment with me today. I can see that you are really making an effort.”

## Pro-social re-inforcement

**Young person:** I am doing the Ark program and may have trouble with getting in here on certain days

**Worker:** We can work around that.

**Young person:** Tiffany said the program is good.

**Worker:** Tiffany spoke with me too and we can work around this. The program teaches you skills.

**Young person:** Cooking but I need

**Worker:** Do you know at this stage when you start?

**Young person:** I go on Wednesday at 2.30 to meet the chef and from then I say when I want to start.

**Worker:** It's all happening for you. You are doing really well. Things are going your way since you got out of custody.

**Young person:** Yes

**Worker:** You've made a lot of changes.

What principles are being used in this conversation?

Worker: You could walk (away from fights).

Client: I could but I wouldn't feel good – best to sort out there and then. Doesn't mean 100% punch on.

Worker: You could come up with another way to deal with it – talk it over without being cheeky, not smart ass and try and sort out situation. Don't get fired up and when they try and put on shit you talk nice and explain. Resolve the situation.

Client: I do that all the time.

Worker: Each time you do that they resolve without being smart or losing face. There is no need to worry about losing face, you just walk away.

Client: Everyone wants to see a fight.  
Worker: Really?  
Client: Everyone I know.  
Worker: That's a massive statement.  
Client: Everyone – most people I know  
talk about how to escalate fights.  
My friends, girls and boys.  
Worker: You don't want to see fights. You  
know not everyone wants to see  
it escalate.  
Client: A lot of people want to escalate  
fights. Why would they say stuff  
unless they wanted to fight.

# Problem survey – for comment

- W: How is school going?
- Yp: Pretty good. Maths is shit.
- W: So you got into year 10. Were you not expecting to?
- Yp: Nah.
- W: Right to go into Year 10 after the assessment.
- Yp: But think it will be all right.
- W: Yeah. I have been meaning to call the school and ask how you have been going and to see if we can help. Just struggling with maths?
- Yp: Yeah, just with maths.
- W: Same girlfriend?
- Yp: Nah got rid of her. Real fucking unstable. Real attached. Would send me suicidal messages.
- W: Was she at school?
- Yp: Nah she was 18.
- W: Dad, how's things there?
- Yp: Dad's been working flat out putting money for a loan. He could only get approved for \$35 000.
- W: What for?
- Yp: Car.
- W: Is your dad a hoon?
- Yp: Loves his cars.
- W: Is he home this arvo?
- Yp: Nah working flat out. I will try and organise him to meet you.

# PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

## 1. ROLE CLARIFICATION

Involves frequent open and honest discussions about -  
the purpose of your intervention,  
your dual role as helper/investigator,  
the clients expectations of you  
your authority and how it can be used  
negotiable and non negotiable areas

## 2. PRO-SOCIAL MODELLING AND RE-INFORCEMENT

Identify client positive (pro-social) comments/actions  
Reward/ encourage positive comments/ behaviours  
Model positive pro-social behaviours  
Discourage anti-social comments/ behaviours  
Focus on positives

## 3. PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Problem Survey
2. Problem Ranking
3. Problem exploration
4. Setting Goals
5. Developing a contract
6. Developing strategies/ case management skills
7. Ongoing review

## 4. RELATIONSHIP

worker is open and honest  
uses empathy  
challenges rationalisations, does not minimise  
non blaming, optimistic, uses humour



## Satisfied with outcome

	Low rating	High rating
Discussed role as helper	(30%)	(67%)* *
Discussed authority	(37%)	(69%)* *
Encouraged client	(30%)	(70%)* *
Clear what disapproved of	(33%)	(56%)* *
Discussed real problems	(35%)	(71%)* *
Worker understood	(30%)	(67%)* *