

Report Summary Overview

SB 678 Incentive-Based Funding and Evidence-Based Practices Enacted by California Probation Are Associated with Lower Recidivism Rates and Improved Public Safety

By Mia Bird and Ryken Grattet

March 2020

Overview

The California Probation Resource Institute (CaPRI) announced the release of its first commissioned report by respected experts [Mia Bird](#), who is a Visiting Assistant Professor at UC Berkeley, and [Ryken Grattet](#), who is a Professor of Sociology at UC Davis entitled “SB 678 Incentive-Based Funding and Evidence-Based Practices Enacted by California Probation Are Associated With Lower Recidivism Rates and Improved Public Safety.” The report analyzed the impact of Senate Bill 678 incentive-based funding on county probation departments, adults under probation’s supervision, and community safety over the past ten years.

Background

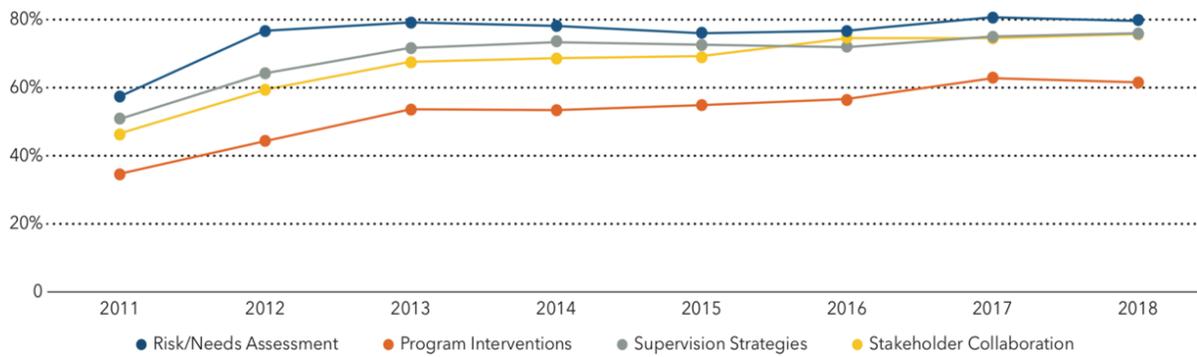
SB 678 was legislation passed in 2009 which established, for the first time, a state funding source for adult probation to provide resources that reduce caseloads and invest in evidence-based supervision and treatment interventions. The report states, “The legislation aligned county and state incentives toward the shared goals of maintaining public safety, reducing the size of the incarcerated population, and reducing correctional costs. The policy change also inspired greater collaboration among county level agencies and between probation departments and key state agencies, including the Judicial Council of California (JCC) and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).”

Report Highlights

The report examined the history and goals of SB 678, and assessed the impacts of this policy change on key criminal justice outcomes. The researchers found a significant reduction in prison revocation, increased funding to probation departments, a culture-change within probation departments, and a decrease of both property and violent crimes. Specific findings include:

- **SB 678 reduced prison revocations by more than 30% after the second year of implementation.** Relative to the baseline rate, prison revocations declined by more than 23% in the first year following the implementation of SB 678. By year two, the legislation had achieved more than a 30% reduction in revocations.
- **SB 678 reduced the prison population by more than 6,000 in the first year of implementation.** Within the first year, the prison population was reduced by more than 6,000 inmates and this trend continued into the second year of the program. With the implementation of Realignment, the prison population declined dramatically due to structural changes in eligibility for sentencing and revocation to prison.
- **SB 678 reduced state correctional expenditures by over \$1 billion since implementation.** In just the first year of implementation, SB 678 reduced state prison expenditures by an estimated \$179 million. Over the full period, the state is estimated to have saved over \$1 billion.
- **SB 678 did not lead to increases in crime rates including property crimes and violent crime rates.** In the two years following the implementation of the legislation, property and violent crime rates declined. In later years, following Realignment and Proposition 47, crime rates fluctuated. By 2018, property crimes rates were substantially lower and violent crime rates were slightly lower than in 2008, the year prior to the implementation of SB 678.
- **SB 678 transformed the culture of probation departments and led to substantial increases in the use of evidence-based practices.** The vast majority of probation departments now use evidence-based practices, including risk and needs assessment, supervision strategies, collaboration with other agencies, and programmatic interventions. The culture of probation departments has shifted from a law-enforcement orientation to a hybrid orientation that strategically balances the priorities of enforcement and social work interventions. Program capacity has also expanded, with most probation officers reporting that there is sufficient program capacity for evidence-based practice.
- **Increased cross-agency collaboration.** The policy change increased collaboration among county level agencies and between probation departments and key state agencies, including the Judicial Council of California (JCC) and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

Probation departments increase use of evidence-based practices following SB 678



Source: Judicial Council of California, Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices: Annual Assessment Survey, 2011-2018.

Areas for Future Growth

- **Limits for training and program capacity:** Probation officers report limited programmatic capacity for clients with mental health challenges or sex offense histories.
- **Data infrastructure:** Counties across the state could use assistance in improving data infrastructure and better utilize data to monitor populations and evaluate outcomes.

###

About The California Probation Research Institute

The California Probation Resource Institute (CaPRI) was created to further the advancement of best practices and evidence-based approaches to continue to drive research-based programs that work for public safety and client restoration. For more information about the California Probation Resource Institute, please go to www.CaPRIInstitute.org.

###