GA DCS
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

Research Agenda

This document provides a broad overview of FY2023 research projects that reflect DCS's evidence-based approach to becoming the national leader in progressive and innovative community supervision.

Four Focus Areas
of DCS Research
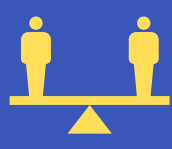
Person-Centered Supervision	Rehabilitative Opportunities	Fairness	Criminal Justice Context
Recognize people as unique individuals and promote success	Remove barriers to success through quality programs	Promote equal opportunities for positive outcomes	Understand the landscape in which our work takes place

FOCUS AREAS

Person-Centered Supervision

(1) A Biosocial Study of Client Outcomes in Probation and Parole: The Role of Officer Stress and Officer-Client Relationships:

Much community supervision research focuses on interventions to reduce recidivism. The responsibility of implementation, however, rests on officers' shoulders, which means officer-client relationships heavily influence the success of interventions. Therefore, it is critical to understand the factors that hinder these relationships, and officer stress is a prime candidate.

To this end, we partnered with the Criminal Justice Department at Georgia State University (GSU) to examine the role of officer stress in forming officer-client relationships and how the resulting relationships impact criminal justice outcomes.

2) Integrated Dynamic Risk Assessment for Community Supervision (IDRACS):

Accurate and timely understanding of the risk of rearrest while on supervision promotes evidence-based practices, which can improve client services and, consequently, criminal justice outcomes.

With support from the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), this project will improve our current risk assessment tool by implementing time-specific models, using recent rather than lifetime criminal history, and incorporating dynamic measures of both protective and risk factors.

In short, IDRACS will assess risk factors to inform supervision strategies in real-time.

FOCUS AREAS

Rehabilitative Opportunities

(3) Enhancing Specialized Mental Health Supervision (SMHS) with a Clinical Case Consultation Model:

Persons with mental illnesses fare significantly worse on supervision than others. Furthermore, assisting clients with mental health needs poses unique challenges for officers.

Therefore, we partnered with the University of North Carolina (UNC) to conduct a multi-site pilot project to improve Georgia's SMHS approach. This intervention will build workforce capacity and give CSOs the competency and support needed to assist clients with mental illness effectively. Specifically, we will increase CSOs' technical skillset and mental health knowledge through a Clinical Case Consultation Model.

(4) State of Georgia Day Reporting Center Program Assessment Tool (DRC-PAT):

Since 2002, DCS has provided evidence-based behavioral health services through DRCs, which includes the provision of community supervision, cognitive behavioral therapy (i.e., Moral Reconation Therapy), addiction treatment, and psychosocial interventions (e.g., GED, vocational training, and family reunification services).

Given the scope of services provided, there was a need to assess the quality assurance of DRCs across the state to ensure services are available and delivered according to 'best' practices.

For this reason, we partnered with the University of Georgia School of Social Work to establish the DRC-PAT as a validated instrument for assessing program quality across all DRCs. This project is an ongoing partnership with UGA to assess our DRCs' adherence to evidence-based principles consistently.

FOCUS AREAS

Fairness

(5) Pursuing 'Total Fairness' in Criminal Justice Settings:

Many public service agencies measure fairness or non-discrimination to meet DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) mandates. However, these metrics vary when organizations select different attributes or aggregation levels for analyses.

To overcome this subjectivity, researchers at Drexel University developed a mathematical representation of conditional parity, termed 'Total Fairness,' to analyze all subgroups of a population across multiple attributes simultaneously. This project will be the first application of this methodology in criminal justice.

In addition to traditional recidivism outcomes, we are viewing Total Fairness across officer decision-making, such as applying ESP skills and incentives.

(6) Gang Renunciation Program:

DCS is designing a program to use with persons exposed to the risk of gang affiliation who desire to abandon gang life and all it represents. The program will provide a formal process for DCS to assist individuals in renouncing and disassociating from gang affiliations.

FOCUS AREAS

Criminal Justice Context

(7) Jail Impact Study:

Probation Options Management (POM) allows DCS to resolve technical and non-violent misdemeanor violations administratively and significantly reduces jail time without compromising public safety. Currently, however, POM is vastly underutilized across the state.

Therefore, we partnered with the GSU Sociology Department to conduct a Jail Impact Studies series. Results from these studies will guide conversations to educate stakeholders on the value of POM by assessing the following:

1. The association between jail sanctions and subsequent recidivism
2. The impact of childhood parental incarceration

8) Arrest Profile:

An accurate picture of arrest trends involving the people we work with is necessary for our agency's strategic decisions. To this end, we partnered with the Council of State Governments (CSG) to develop a comprehensive profile of arrest data across an array of demographic variables.

(9) Evaluation of Georgia Probation Reforms, 2020-2021:

Partnership with RTI to evaluate the implementation of Georgia's most recent probation reforms introduced via Senate Bill 105 and will examine three areas:

1. Implementation/Process
2. Criminal Justice Outcomes
3. Organizational Impact

Research Partners

DCS strives to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application through grant opportunities and strong relationships with the academic community.

To access complete reports of findings and details of strategic initiatives stemming from research projects, please visit our public website:

dcs.ga.gov/strategic-planning-research