

SPECIALTY PROBATION

Research suggests that 'specialty probation' agencies have the following characteristics:

PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS ARE ASSIGNED TO STAFF WITH TRAINING IN MENTAL HEALTH



STAFF HAVE RELATIVELY SMALL, EXCLUSIVELY MENTAL HEALTH CASELOADS



STAFF RECEIVE ONGOING TRAINING, 20-40 HOURS A YEAR



PROBATION STAFF WORK IN TEAMS WITH TREATMENT PROVIDERS, ATTENDING THEIR TEAM MEETINGS AND ACTIVELY ACCESSING CARE FOR PEOPLE ON THEIR CASELOADS



NON-COMPLIANCE WITH TREATMENT IS APPROACHED USING PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES RATHER THAN THREATS OF REINCARCERATION



Early research also suggests the following potential benefits from this approach:

- Improved access to treatment
- "Two studies—one focus group study and one national survey—suggest that probationers with mental illness, probation officers, and probation supervisors perceive specialty caseloads as more effective than traditional caseloads" (Skeem and Eno Loudon, 2006: 339)
- "Three additional studies—two randomized controlled trials and one uncontrolled cohort study—suggest that specialty agencies are more effective than traditional agencies in linking probationers with treatment services, improving their well-being, and reducing their risk of probation violation. Evidence is mixed on whether specialty agencies reduce probationers' longer term risk of rearrest" (Skeem and Eno Loudon, 2006: 339-340)