

CASE STUDY

Targeting High-Risk Offenders:

A Collaboration Between a Probation Department and a Police Department

INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, Compton was selected to be part of the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ's) National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). The PSP is a DOJ-wide program that enables cities to consult with and receive coordinated training and technical assistance (TTA) and resources from DOJ to support violence reduction strategies as part of a three-year engagement. Compton participated in the PSP from October 2015 to September 2018.



In order to strategically focus efforts in Compton, in February 2017, the local and federal partner agencies developed a five-year **Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Compton Station Strategic Plan**,¹ focusing on reducing crime to the lowest levels, increasing community collaboration, and promoting locally driven economic growth in Compton. In order to meet the goals of the strategic plan, Compton leveraged federal and local partnerships fostered through PSP participation. One of these partnerships was with the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

The Los Angeles County Probation Department is the largest probation department in the U.S. and presumably the world and employs more than 6,500 employees. The department is responsible for supervising 12,000 state parolees, 60,000 adult probationers, and 1,000 youth.² Several of these probationers reside within the City of Compton, and approximately 20 of those individuals are considered ultra-high risk repeat offenders. Ultra-high-risk offenders score at least a 30 on the Level of Service-Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) (discussed below) and pose a substantial threat to the surrounding community. These individuals tend to have histories of gang and gun violence. The Probation Department has several probation officers assigned to the City of Compton, and one is dedicated solely to working with these ultra-high and high-risk offenders and the Compton PSP collaboration.

At the beginning of the Compton PSP's engagement, Captain Michael Thatcher invited the Los Angeles County Probation Department to join the PSP collaborative. The goal of this partnership was to target the high-risk repeat offenders mentioned above. In September 2016, the Probation Department, with PSP assistance, researched the use of various risk assessments and reinstituted the use of the LS/CMI.

The LS/CMI is a risk assessment tool that evaluates a variety of areas in an offender's life, including criminal history, criminal attitude and orientation, family background, alcohol and drug use, education and employment history, incarceration history, antisocial patterns, and

Offender Name _____ Gender M F Age _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
Identifying Number _____ Interviewer _____ Interview Date ____/____/____

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The LS/CMI assessment is a quantitative survey of offender attributes and situations relevant to decision-making regarding level of service. Some items are in a yes/no format, and some are in a 3-0 rating format, based on the following scale:

3: A satisfactory situation with no need for improvement
2: A relatively satisfactory situation with some room for improvement
1: A relatively unsatisfactory situation with a need for improvement
0: A very unsatisfactory situation with a very clear and strong need for improvement

Place an X over the appropriate response for each item, whether it is a yes, no, or a rating number. The responses will transfer through to the scoring sheet beneath for quick tallying of the LS/CMI subcomponent scores and total score. If the section is a strength for the offender, place an X in the Strength box. Refer to the LS/CMI User's Manual or LS/CMI Scoring Guide for guidelines on rating items. When there is insufficient information to respond, circle the item number. Complete and score Section 1 before completing Sections 2 to 8.

Section 1: General Risk/Need Factors

1.1 Criminal History

No Yes 1. Any prior youth dispositions (number ____) or adult convictions (number ____)?
No Yes 2. Two or more prior youth/adult dispositions/convictions?
No Yes 3. Three or more prior youth/adult dispositions/convictions?
No Yes 4. Three or more present offenses (number ____)?
No Yes 5. Arrested or charged under age 16?
No Yes 6. Ever incarcerated upon conviction?
No Yes 7. Ever punished for institutional misconduct or a behavior report (number ____)?
No Yes 8. Charge held, probation breached, or parole suspended during prior community supervision?
Strength? ☐

1.2 Education/Employment

When in the labor market (either in the community or long-term imprisonment with work opportunities):
No Yes 9. Currently unemployed?
No Yes 10. Frequently unemployed?
No Yes 11. Never employed for a full year?

School or when in school:
No Yes 12. Less than regular grade 10 or equivalent?
No Yes 13. Less than regular grade 12 or equivalent?
No Yes 14. Suspended or expelled at least once.

For the next three questions, if the offender is a homemaker or pensioner, complete question 15 only. If the offender is in school or working, complete 15, 16, and 17. If the offender is available for the labor market but is unemployed and not in school, rate 0 for 15-17.
3 2 1 0 15. Participation/Performance.
3 2 1 0 16. Peer interactions.
3 2 1 0 17. Authority interaction.
Strength? ☐

1.3 Family/Marital

3 2 1 0 18. Dissatisfaction with marital or equivalent situation.
3 2 1 0 19. Nonrewarding, parental.
3 2 1 0 20. Nonrewarding, other relatives.
No Yes 21. Criminal—family/spouse.
Strength? ☐

MHS

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Level of Service-Case Management Inventory Tool

¹ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Compton Station Strategic Plan. (2017). <http://shq.lasdnews.net/content/uoa/CPT/Compton%20Strategic%20Plan%20February%202017%20Final.pdf>.

² About Us: Los Angeles County Probation Department website. (2018). <https://probation.lacounty.gov/about-probation/>

social, physical, and mental health considerations. The LS/CMI can be used on all offenders age 18 and older, and aids professionals in planning treatment and managing offenders in the justice, forensic, correctional, prevention, and related contexts. This assessment helps to identify ultra-high and high risk individuals that the probation department monitors.

Scoring on this assessment ranges from 0 to 43, as follows:

- 0-10 denotes low risk (very few individuals receive this ranking).
- 11-19 denotes medium risk.
- 20-29 denotes high risk.
- 30-43 denotes ultra-high risk.

The form itself takes approximately 20-30 minutes to complete, and interview times vary. Additional information on the LS/CMI can be found [here](#).

Los Angeles Probation Department Risk Assessment Summary Form

visits include conversations with the parolee or probationer, and with their neighbors, families, and friends.

The Probation Department then develops a case management plan for each probationer. The case plan takes into consideration the individual's risk assessment score, criminogenic needs, and special responsivity considerations. The Probation Officer identifies the individual's strengths, key life areas, goals, skills in need of development, and interventions during the development of the case plan. Integrated case plans with other services, such as mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, housing services, and employment services, are also considered in the Probation Department's case plan. The case plan template can be shared through PSP request.

LS/CMI RISK ASSESSMENT AREAS

- ✓ Criminal History
- ✓ Education/Employment
- ✓ Family/Marital Relationships
- ✓ Leisure/Recreation Activities
- ✓ Companions
- ✓ Alcohol/Substance Abuse
- ✓ Pro-criminal Attitude/Orientation
- ✓ Antisocial Patterns
- ✓ Criminogenic Potential
- ✓ Barriers to Release
- ✓ Social, Physical, and Mental Health
- ✓ Special Responsivity Considerations
- ✓ Programmatic Considerations

The Probation Department completes the risk assessment

tool at three critical stages in the justice system: 1) upon an offender's release from a correctional institution, 2) after re-entry and re-release, and 3) every six months while the individual is under supervision. This ensures that the Probation Department is aware of the ongoing risk that the probationer or parolee poses and allows the department to accurately re-evaluate and update the individual's case plan as needed (discussed below).

The department then uses the individual's score to determine how frequently assigned probation officers conduct home and office visits. For example, if an individual is determined to be ultra-high risk, the assigned Probation Officer will conduct two home visits a month and see the individual in the office at least once a month. The officer may even see ultra-high-risk repeat offenders upwards of five times per month if needed. These home

CASE PLAN ELEMENTS FOR HIGH RISK OFFENDERS

- ✓ Risk Assessment Score
- ✓ Criminogenic Needs
- ✓ Individual Strengths
- ✓ Key Life Areas
- ✓ Goals
- ✓ Skills in Need of Development
- ✓ Intervention
- ✓ Case Plan Integration

PSP IMPACTS

Risk assessment tools have been validated and used extensively within the probation and parole domains. Los Angeles is no exception. Since re-instituting the use of the risk assessment tool, the Probation Department has been able to assess an offender's level of risk more accurately and efficiently. Appropriately identifying an offender's level of risk allows the department to determine the correct number of contacts that each probation officer needs to have with his or her probationers and parolees on a monthly basis. This ongoing evaluation and monitoring by the Probation Department impacts and potentially mitigates the level of risk that the probationer or parolee could pose to the city. It also provides the City of Compton and the Probation Department with the information needed to provide higher levels of service to these individuals, which helps them more successfully re-integrate into the community and reduces their likelihood of re-offending. The Probation Department is then able to provide this information to both Compton Station and the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office (LADA). These impacts and other success are discussed below.

Los Angeles County Probation Department Probationer/Parolee Process Flow



Representatives from the Los Angeles County Probation Department attend the monthly in-person Compton Collaboration Law Enforcement Meetings. Representatives share critical intelligence related to criminal activity (i.e., ghost guns and narcotics trafficking) during these meetings. The Probation Department uses the information obtained from these meetings to inform its visits with probationers and parolees. In return, the Probation Department is able to provide the other local and federal partners with information on individuals who are suspected to be involved in criminal activities.

In addition to the monthly in-person meetings, representatives from the Los Angeles County Probation Department regularly communicate with the other Compton Collaboration partners via regular phone call and email. These partners include the U.S. Marshal's Service (USMS) and the LADA. The Probation Department shares critical intelligence about high-risk probationers and parolees to each agency. For example, if a local gang member is on probation and re-offends, the Probation Department will provide LADA with this information. LADA will then flag the case for special attention to ensure that the offender receives the maximum sentence possible. The Probation Department has also provided information to the USMS, which has resulted in the arrest of several probationers on federal, state, and local warrants. In return, each agency provides information to the Probation Department. LADA provides the Probation Department with frequent updates on court cases involving probationers and parolees. Furthermore, all three agencies collaborate in the serving and execution of bench warrant searches. If an individual is rated as ultra-high risk on the risk assessment tool and he or she absconds or stops reporting to their probation officer, a bench warrant is served within 24-72 hours. The USMS will then assist the Probation Department with conducting these high priority bench warrant searches and periodic searches.

"The Los Angeles County Probation Department is willing and able to continue this partnership."

— Bernard Nkemere, Los Angeles County Probation Department

Because of these enhanced partnerships, the Probation Department has also participated in high-level searches and arrests with the federal partners, including the USMS. When probation officers have been unable to participate in these operations first-hand, the federal partners have successfully executed special requests from the Probation Department. Direct participation in these search and arrest operations has strengthened the partnership between the Probation Department and the federal partners, increased the amount of information shared between partners, and increased the number of high-risk offenders arrested. This effort has substantially impacted the level of crime within the City of Compton.

Since October 2015, 14 high-risk repeat offenders have been identified and re-arrested. Approximately half of those offenders have been re-arrested since November 2016. 80 percent of these individuals were considered ultra-high risk. Several more are currently awaiting trial.

The Probation Department has also worked closely with LADA to ensure that both the number of convictions obtained and the severity of the sentence imposed on probationers and parolees are appropriate. This collaboration has assisted the assigned Deputy District Attorney (DDA) with case preparation and prosecution. The DDA provides the Probation Officer with updates on what is occurring in court, so that the Probation Department has the most up-to-date information on the court case and the probationer or parolee's status.

LESSONS LEARNED AND SUSTAINABILITY



EVALUATE THE PROGRAM AND PARTNERSHIP: When establishing a partnership of this nature, the Los Angeles County Probation Department recommends looking at the entire program and collaboration, and determining which partnerships would be the most beneficial to your agency. Local agencies tend to be more willing to assist than federal agencies, but this is not always the case. The Probation Department found its strongest partners in Compton Station, LADA, and the USMS.



DEFINE SUCCESS: All partners must agree on a common definition of success. This definition should take into consideration the overall goals of the partnership and the priorities of each participating agency. Without a common definition of success and clearly defined goals, the partnership cannot be successful.



SHARE INFORMATION: Each partner should be willing to involve or share pertinent information with fellow collaborators as needed. To achieve success, everyone must be willing to share information without being concerned about "obtaining the glory." At the same time, everyone should be cognizant of the sensitivity of certain cases.



Los Angeles County Probation Officer arresting a high risk offender.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department will continue to partner with Compton Station and its federal and local partners. Due to the successes experienced in Compton, the Probation Department would like to see the PSP partnership expand into a county-wide initiative that involves the Los Angeles Police Department and other public safety partners. Expanding this partnership would give all agencies involved access to additional resources.