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HIGH RISK OFFENDER CASELOAD DESCRIPTION

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ACQUISITIONS

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HIGH RISK OFFENDER CASELOAD DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

This report describes offenders supervised by the High Risk Offender (HRO) project and notes the case outcomes observed for them. It is the first of a series of planned reports which will examine project operations, assess client selection procedures, and eventually evaluate the impact of intensive supervision on offender behavior.

The High Risk Offender (HRO) project is an experimental community supervision program implemented by the Division of Corrections to reduce community exposure to serious criminal activity. By providing intensive community supervision to selected offenders on probation or parole, the project attempts to restrict or preempt criminal behavior. The project's two principal tasks are to identify offenders entering probation or parole who, on the basis of their past behavior, pose a high assaultive risk in the community; and to intensively supervise high risk offenders by combining close surveillance with special probation or parole conditions that discourage criminal activity. Project staff work in two-person teams and share supervisory responsibility for a caseload of 40-50 offenders. The small caseload and team supervision make it possible to monitor offender behavior very closely and effectively enforce special conditions. This report describes the client caseload and outcomes in the Madison region of the Bureau of Community Corrections where the HRO project was first implemented.

By May of 1986, nearly 100 offenders had been supervised by the HRO project which was implemented early in 1984. Project operations and procedures have experienced some changes over time but are now stabilized. At implementation, the original HRO agent team transferred active cases from other Madison area agents to fill the project caseload. At present, clients are selected by HRO staff from the institution caseload or new probation cases assigned to agents in the Madison area. Consequently, project clients now receive intensive supervision from the time they enter probation or parole and HRO staff exercise more control over the selection process. In addition, supervision procedures have changed over time as project agents developed new techniques to deal with a specialized high risk offender caseload. Now that a reasonably large number of offenders have been served and its operations have matured, the time is right to begin examining the HRO project more closely.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HIGH RISK OFFENDER CASELOAD

In examining who High Risk Offenders are, the report will employ three sets of descriptive characteristics: 1) presenting case information such as release status, age, etc.; 2) prior offense history (i.e., prior to HRO selection); and 3) behavior during HRO supervision. This is not a comparative assessment of HRO clients since their characteristics and supervisory outcomes are not compared to another group. Such a comparison will be made in a subsequent report after a similar group of offenders has been selected for that purpose. Findings presented here describe the

active and closed HRO caseload as of May 1986. Out of state clients assigned to the Madison project were excluded. The information was secured through case record reviews.

Release Status, Age and Prior Institutional Experience

It may be helpful to keep in mind that HRO clients are not typical offenders. They were selected because project agents felt that they posed an unusually high degree of assaultive risk. This is readily apparent in the profile presented here.

Most HRO clients (68%) entered supervision from correctional institutions after completing a prison term, but a significant number (27%) were probationers or mental health cases (5%). Mental health cases are clients committed to treatment institutions after a criminal offense for whom post commitment supervision has been ordered by the courts (see Table 1).

A very large proportion of the High Risk caseload has a prior institutional experience. This may take the form of an adult or juvenile penal commitment (91%), or a commitment (voluntary or court ordered) to a mental health inpatient facility (27%). Around 94% of the HRO clients had at least one of these kinds of institutional experience prior to entering project supervision.

TABLE 1: RELEASE STATUS, AGE AND PRIOR INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCE

<u>Release Status:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Prison Release	63	68%
Probation	25	27%
Mental Health Case	5	5%
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Total	93	100%
<u>Prior Institutional Experience:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Adult or Juvenile Penal	85	91%
Mental Health Inpatient	25	27%
<u>Age of HRO Selection:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Lt 25	26	28%
26 to 30	13	14%
31 Plus	54	58%
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Total	93	100%

Around 28% of the HRO clients were age 25 or younger when they entered supervision, 14% were age 26 to 30, and 58% were 31 plus. This is a relatively old group, but the project's selection criteria favor individuals with extensive criminal records -- something which young offenders are less likely to have acquired. The prior offense profile which follows demonstrates this more clearly.

Prior Offense History

All the offenders selected for high risk supervision have at least one prior violent offense. Not all violent offenses are assaultive. Crimes such as robbery, or armed robbery may involve the threat of violence rather than actual assaultive behavior. In the table below, assaultive offenses are distinguished from violent offenses. Sexual assaults are recorded as a special subset of assaultive offenses (i.e., sexual assaults are also included in the Any Assault category). In this presentation, assaultive offenses are those in which a direct personal assault was attempted or completed by the offender. Around 83% of the clients selected by the HRO project had a prior assaultive offense of any type, 36% had at least one prior sexual assault, and 45% had injured a victim during a crime.

TABLE 2: PRIOR OFFENSE HISTORY

<u>Prior Assaultive Offenses:</u>	<u>%</u>
Any Assaults	83%
Sexual Assault	36%
Victim Injured	45%
 <u>Prior Violent Offenses:</u>	 <u>%</u>
One	15%
Two to Three	54%
Four Plus	31%
 <u>Prior Offenses (All Kinds):</u>	 <u>%</u>
One	1%
Two to Three	15%
Four Plus	84%
 <u>Weapons Use or Possession</u>	 <u>%</u>
Any Weapon	64%
Firearm	27%

A large number of the cases selected for HRO supervision had an extensive history of violent criminal behavior. More than half (54%) had committed two or three violent offenses and 31% had been involved in four or more. As might be expected, prior offenses (of all kinds) also reflect extensive criminal histories - 84% of these offenders had four or more prior offenses. Past use of a weapon during a crime was observed in the case

histories of 64% of the HRO clients and 27% were in possession of or used a firearm during a past offense (firearms are included in the Any Weapon category).

The profile that emerges from the preceding analysis leaves little doubt that the HRO project has selected offenders who, based on prior behavior, pose a high degree of assaultive risk. Prior assaults, multiple prior violent offenses, personal injury to victims, and a marked tendency to employ weapons during criminal activity are relatively routine observations in the case histories of these individuals.

CASE OUTCOMES

Cases transferred into the HRO project when it was implemented pose a special problem when examining case outcomes. Many of these offenders entered supervision several months prior to that transfer. Once the project was established, offenders entered the project at the onset of probation or parole and received intensive supervision throughout their field experience. These circumstances complicate a standardized followup of post release behavior under intensive supervision because not all clients experienced it to the same degree.

The best approach is to examine the behavior of those offenders who received HRO supervision from the start and ignore transfer cases with a limited exposure to intensive supervision. This makes sense because the

supervisory experience of transfer cases varies considerably from offenders who have entered (or will enter) the project after its brief implementation phase. Having said this, we proceed to do the opposite for the following reasons: 1) there are a relatively small number of HRO cases available and eliminating transfers reduces that number further; 2) this is a descriptive presentation rather than an evaluation and the behavior of all HRO clients is of interest. Transfer cases and their outcomes will be eliminated in subsequent reports when comparative judgements are made about the impact of intensive supervision relative to regular supervision.

Table 3, below, displays the approximate status of HRO clients as of the end of May 1986, and the months HRO clients had been on probation or parole supervision as of May appears in table 4.

TABLE 3: STATUS OF HRO CLIENTS

<u>Status:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Revoked	43	46%
Discharged	9	10%
Transferred	4	4%
<u>Active</u>	<u>37*</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	93	100%

* Excludes out of state paroles, cases entering the project during and since May 1986, and cases in HRO supervision for the second time.

TABLE 4: MONTHS SINCE ENTERING PROBATION OR PAROLE

<u>Months:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Lt 6	12	13%
7 to 11	13	14%
12 to 24	68	73%
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Total	93	100%

As of May 1986, around 46% of the clients selected into the HRO project had been revoked. Approximately 10% were successfully discharged from supervision and 4% were transferred to regular supervision because in the opinion of project agents, the client no longer required intensive supervision (see Table 3 above).

Table 4 shows elapsed time between client entry to supervision and May of 1986. Only 73% of all HRO clients (68 cases) began supervision more than 12 months prior to May. Turnover in the HRO caseload is relatively slow. As might be expected, many of these offenders face rather long probation or parole terms so caseload vacancies are created by revocation more often than sentence discharge.

At this point in time, a standardized* one year followup is possible for only 68 HRO clients. This followup observes criminal activity and probation or parole violations that occurred within the first year of

* A standardized followup observes how offenders, whose exposure to community supervision is equivalent, behave in a fixed time interval.

supervision for offenders entering probation or parole at least one year prior to May 1986. About 28 of these 68 offenders are transfer cases. Table 5 describes the case outcomes for this followup.

TABLE 5: ONE YEAR HRO CASE OUTCOMES

<u>Returned to Prison for:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Felony Offense	8	12%
Misdemeanor Offense	5	7%
Technical Violation	4	6%
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Total Returned to Prison	17	25%

Around 25% of the HRO cases for whom a one year followup is possible were returned to prison for criminal activity or a technical violation of probation or parole. This includes 12% for felony offenses, 7% for misdemeanors, and 6% for technical violations. Readers should exercise caution when interpreting these results since the presence of a large number (28 of 68 cases observed) of transfer clients may affect the findings considerably. There is reason to believe that the failure rate will be much higher if transfers were eliminated. Results in Tables 5 and 6 are intended to describe client behavior, but should not be used to judge project impact.

These offense classifications were made by case reviewers and are based primarily on revocation summaries. Findings concerning the type of offenses committed are advisory since some cases have not gone to trial. Court proceedings and sentencing frequently lags revocation proceedings.

Of particular interest, given the typical past offense history of HRO clients, is the incidence of assaultive offenses and weapons use. Table 6 summarizes these findings.

TABLE 6: ASSAULTIVE OFFENSES AND WEAPONS USE OR POSSESSION

<u>Assaultive Offenses:</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Any Assault	7	10%
Sexual Assault	3	4%
Victim Injured	1	2%
<u>Weapons Use or Possession</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>%</u>
Any Weapon	4	6%
Firearm	0	0%

Around 10% of the 68 offenders observed here were involved in an assault* - 4% committed a sexual assault and 6% committed assaults of another type. Injury to a victim requiring medical attention was observed in only one instance. Weapons use or possession occurred in four cases or 6% of the followup group and no instances of firearm possession or use were observed.

* Keep in mind that sexual assaults are also included in the Any Assault category. There were 3 sexual assaults and 4 other assaults for a total of 7.

SUMMARY

This is a descriptive report with a limited objective which is to provide the reader basic information about who HRO clients are and how they behave in the community. It is not intended as an assessment of the project's impact on offender behavior, and, therefore, no conclusions about that are drawn. In fact, it would not be appropriate to even attempt such conclusions because the presence of transfer cases biases the findings. An assessment of intensive supervision will be attempted when a comparison group of similar offenders who received regular supervision has been identified. Identification of this comparison group presents some problems because HRO clients have unusual characteristics. Work is proceeding on this task and it should be possible to perform a preliminary comparison in the first half of 1987. At that time, the number of HRO participants supervised for the minimum period of one year should be large enough to support a comparative analysis. Client selection procedures will be examined in another paper.