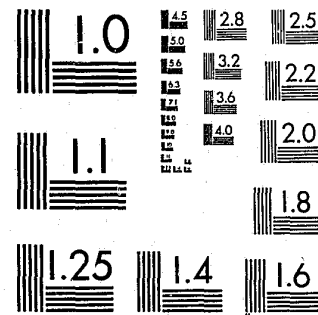


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A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL ACTION:  
The Improved Correctional Field  
Services Project

BY

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This is one of a series of reports on the Improved Correctional Field Services Project Evaluation. The series consists of these parts:

1. Abstract
2. Executive Summary by Don M. Gottfredson, James O. Finckenauer, John J. Gibbs and Stephen D. Gottfredson.
3. The Improved Correctional Field Services Project: A Case Study by James O. Finckenauer and Don M. Gottfredson.
4. Screening for Risk: An Assessment of the ICFS Project Instruments by Faye S. Taxman, Don M. Gottfredson and James O. Finckenauer.
5. Risk, Supervision, and Recidivism: The First Six Months of Recorded Experience in the Improved Correctional Field Services Project by Don M. Gottfredson, James O. Finckenauer, and Faye S. Taxman.
  - Appendix A: ICFS Instructions for Coding.
  - Appendix B: Characteristics of the Sample for the First Six Months of Experience in the ICFS Project.
6. Social Adjustment: A Preliminary Report of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project by James O. Finckenauer and Faye S. Taxman.
7. The Needs and Concerns of Probationers: A Thematic Analysis of Interviews by John J. Gibbs.
8. The Needs and Concerns of Probationers: An Analysis of Questionnaires by John J. Gibbs.
9. Additivity and Interactions in Offense Seriousness Scales by Stephen D. Gottfredson, Kathy S. Young and William S. Laufer. 65872
10. Describing Probation Populations: Offense Seriousness by Stephen D. Gottfredson.
  - Appendix A: Offense Seriousness Scoring System.
11. Exploring the Dimensions of Judged Offense Seriousness by Stephen D. Gottfredson.
  - Appendix A: Offense Seriousness Study (survey form).
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ABSTRACT

This case study of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project describes the pre-implementation history of one social action project. The history encompasses a period of about five years (1974-1978). It illustrates some of the pitfalls that may confront a program developer and evaluator. The questions addressed in the analysis include:

- Are the sources of social innovation and action important determinants of program success?
- What is the effect, if any, when there are different sources of action and innovation, as when the Federal government originates and funds state and local projects?
- Does encountering obstacles and problems alter, if only to some degree, the ultimate nature of a program?
- If a program develops in a dynamic, adaptive way, what are the implications for planning and evaluation?

As a study of the development and change of concepts and objectives within a particular project, this case history provides one illustration of change as these concepts are implemented and evaluated.

## Introduction.

The development and change of social program objectives, despite their centrality in evaluations, seldom have been studied as problems in their own right. An examination of the history of the basic concepts providing the motivation and structure for a project may, however, help explain what happened in the implementation and evaluation stemming from these concepts.

The evolution of the goals of one such project will be described in this report. If potential pitfalls for the program developer or evaluator are noted, perhaps means of avoiding or overcoming them may be found. If conflicts or obstacles that force adaptations are observed, the ultimate nature of the program might be better understood. If the program develops in a dynamic, adaptive way, implications for the evaluation may be important. If the sources of innovation and action are diverse, this may be related to the ultimate program outcomes. If, as is often the case, the Federal government originates and funds state or local projects, this may have unforeseen effects. And if the broad aims of a program, as envisioned by its originators, may be defined, these provide a basis for assessment of the impact of the program beyond the narrow confines of specific project objectives.

## Orientation and Action

In 1969 Wilkins and Gottfredson presented the concept of a typology of innovative orientation and action.<sup>1</sup> It was based on several assumptions. The first was that social action turns on the discovery of social problems. Next, institutional innovation may be generated internally or may be imposed by an outside source; and it was assumed that action depends upon the source of information (internal or external) about a problem. The underlying hypothesis was that internal information increases the chances of success of problem-solving, conversely, external information decreases them. Flowing from the assumptions and the hypothesis were three fundamental questions that may be addressed with regard to any social action program such as the Improved Correctional Field Services.

1. Who defined the problem?
2. Who proposed the solution to the problem?
3. Who took action to implement the solution?

The typology was described as follows:

Innovative Action

		internal	external
I n n o v a t i v e  O r i e n t a t i o n	internal	problem defined by the institution, solution sought in relation to the emergence of the problem, action is restricted to the institution	problem defined by the institution, solution sought in relation to the emergence of the problem, action is external to institution
	external	problem defined by an external agency, solution in terms of how that agency defines the problem, action is imposed upon the institution	problem defined by an external agency, solution in terms of how that agency defines the problem, action is external to the institution

According to this formulation, the internal-internal combination -- the circumstance of the upper left hand cell of the matrix -- is most likely to lead to successful implementation. Expected to be least successful is the external-external category. Difficulties are to be expected when the problem is defined externally to the agency that is to provide the action. The grid shown, of course, may be an oversimplification; but the extent to which goals are convergent -- which may be a matter of degree -- would be hypothesized to be an important determinant of implementation success.

Initial Conceptualization toward The Improved Correctional Field Services Project

Offenders may be classified by objective means according to risk; they may be assigned to different kinds and degrees of supervision; and such differential classification and supervision may have value in terms of improved outcomes. This concept provides the basis for the ICFS project and its evaluation. It is not new. Indeed, it is a concept investigated since at least 1953 in California and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> These studies may have provided some of the basis for the ICFS conceptualization, but that is hard to tell. The documented history of ICFS begins in 1974.

The late Robert Martinson in that year published an article in The Public Interest entitled, "What works? - Questions and Answers about Prison Reform."<sup>3</sup> Its substance has been well known and extremely controversial. The controversy derives in part from an incorrect but widespread belief that Martinson's conclusion was that "nothing works" in correctional treatment. A careful reading of the article, buttressed by later work by Martinson and his colleagues, discloses that this was not Martinson's intent. Rather, one correctional program area that he mentioned favorably (as potentially promising) was that of probation. For example, he said of community treatment programs (including probation). "... some of them did have the advantage of

being less onerous to the offender himself without seeming to pose increased danger to the community. And some of these programs ... simply cost fewer dollars to administer."<sup>4</sup>

Martinson's support for probation was founded upon a different premise than its hoped for treatment or rehabilitative effect, however. He said:

... when intensive supervision does produce an improvement in offenders' behavior, it does so not through the mechanism of 'treatment' or 'rehabilitation', but instead through a mechanism that our studies have almost totally ignored - the mechanism of deterrence.<sup>5</sup>

He referred to the 1967 San Francisco Project which studied the effects of variable levels of supervision with adult probationers.<sup>6</sup> The findings from that project indicated that intensity of supervision was positively associated with technical violations of probation rules and negatively associated with new offenses. In other words, closely supervised probationers were more likely to be found in violation of rules infractions but were less likely to have been found to commit new crimes. The author of the project's report concluded that "technical violations are a direct function of the amount of supervision provided."<sup>7</sup> Proportionately fewer new offenses with intensive supervision were observed, but these differences were not statistically significant. Commenting favorably upon these results, Martinson noted that "intensive supervision combined the highest rate of technical violations with the lowest rate for new offenses."<sup>8</sup> These and other

results seemed to provide the basis for Martinson's support for intensive probation supervision on the grounds of its deterrent effect. He did, however, add the caveat that a policy of keeping greater numbers of higher risk offenders in the community (under probation supervision, for example) could result in a rise in the total number of offenses and increased chances of victimization.

The theme that stands out in Martinson's analysis of probation is that of deterrence and its effect upon reducing new criminal behavior and crime rates. This theme was re-emphasized and expanded upon in a later Martinson article published in 1976.<sup>9</sup>

Between Martinson's 1974 and 1976 articles a related event occurred which set the stage for the birth of ICFS. Martinson was to play a very important role in that event.<sup>10</sup>

The then Administrator of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) formed a Consultant Committee on Corrections in 1975.<sup>11</sup> The Committee, which came to be called, in LEAA, the Blue Ribbon Committee on Corrections, was "... charged with the task of assessing the current status of Corrections ... and recommending to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration those actions it should take ..."<sup>12</sup> The central policy recommendation of the Committee was:

LEAA efforts in the area of Corrections will center upon: (1) the improvement of incapacitative capability, involving the use of gradated degrees



of control and supervision in probation, institutions and parole, with the objective of reducing the volume of crime committed by its clients; and (2) a search for effective techniques of rehabilitation, based on the principle of voluntary participation, with the requirement that all such projects be accompanied by hard, realistic measures of results.

The emphasis, as in Martinson's published work already cited, was upon control and supervision in probation, with the objective of reducing crime. Recommending the reorganization of probation and parole field service, the Committee proposed abandoning the one-to-one model of supervision as well as old notions of caseloads and definitions of success. They recommended classification of probationers and parolees by the degree of supervision and control needed. "Control and supervision", they said, "would be classified into three or four categories - from minimum to maximum ..."13 Further, "the objective would be to provide clients with the degree of supervision needed to discourage them from committing further crimes, or to detect them as quickly as possible when they do become involved in further crimes."14

The Martinson influence seems to be apparent but may be reflected more clearly in the Committee's final recommendation in this area. It proposed changing the traditional success measures as follows:

... under the proposed concept ... relatively high rates of failure would be expected - the objective of the proposal is to reduce the amount of crime probation and parole clients become involved in, not to show (as now and in the past) high rates of successful completion of probation and parole which come about because inadequate supervision does not

detect reinvolvement in crime and delinquency ... Intensive supervision should be expected to produce high rates of revocation; this should be taken as one indication of the efficiency of the system - the commitment of those clients who have proved to be continued threats to the public order.15

This recommendation unquestionably reflects Martinson's views of deterrence, of a control model of probation, and detection and sanction of repeat criminal behavior as the most important measure of success. The Committee rejected what had become the accepted wisdom in some circles, namely that intensive probation supervision was a failure. Instead, said the committee, intensive supervision has shown its efficiency in identifying and removing probationers who prove to be a continuing threat to the public safety.

#### The General Accounting Office Report

About this same time (that is, 1975 and early 1976), the United States General Accounting Office was preparing a report for the Congress entitled, "State and County Probation: Systems in Crisis." This report, released on May 27, 1976, was devoted primarily to the role of LEAA in probation and the stance it should adopt in providing leadership, funds and technical assistance. Among its overall conclusions, the GAO said that probation systems were not adequately protecting the public.16 Thus the concern for public safety again received prominent mention.

One of the major innovations stressed in the report was that of probation predictive models which, the GAO recommended, should be used more frequently.17 The models to which the

report referred had been developed by means of statistical methods used to summarize and weigh the characteristics of probationers to determine how these characteristics related to the probationer's ultimate success or failure. The purpose of such a prediction device is to aid decision-making by enhancing the ability to accurately forecast probable probation outcomes. The report concluded that predictive, mathematical models employing risk scores could be "useful in deciding who should be recommended for probation, what level of supervision is needed, and who might be considered for early release."<sup>18</sup>

In addition to its emphasis upon public safety as a goal of probation, at least two other messages were conveyed clearly to LEAA by the GAO report. First, additional research on and use of prediction models was needed; and second, one of the benefits of such models would be to determine supervision levels for probationers.

#### LEAA Reacts

Just where and with whom responsibility rests in LEAA for the conception and development of ICFS is very difficult to determine. Lost, misplaced, or unavailable documentation and memoranda do not permit the ready reconstruction of a complete historical "paper trail." Offices and divisions within LEAA were reorganized and changed during this period. Individuals came and went because of transfers, resignations, retirements, or death. Different people were involved with

ICFS at various stages and thus lack comprehensive knowledge of the entire chain of development. Among the present and former LEAA personnel who were willing to be interviewed by us about the history of ICFS (many were not willing), there was quite commonly a tendency to plead ignorance and to deny responsibility for any shortcomings or weaknesses in the project. This should not be taken as merely a mechanism of defense, for the personnel involved changed roles and responsibilities as the program developed. Blaming others, however, was not uncommon. Some officials in a position to know appeared to be surprisingly ill-informed about the project.

What follows is an effort on our part to reconstruct as best we can from the available documents and from interviews with those LEAA and project personnel who were cooperative some of what happened during the planning and program development phase of ICFS, that is, from the latter part of 1976 through mid-1978, when the project was implemented. Two of the members of a reported original LEAA project design group were among those we interviewed. (The characterization "reported" is used because there is some confusion as to whether there was such a group and, if it did exist, just who its members were. There is agreement that the initial work took place in the then Office of Regional Operations - later named the Office of Criminal Justice Programs). Neither of these particular individuals was with LEAA at the time they were interviewed. Their recollections about



the origins of ICFS are indicative of some of the problems mentioned above. One respondent recalled that LEAA staff intended to develop a risk classification model which would reduce the flow of offenders at certain points - with the major concern being diversion from an already overcrowded system. Some offenders were to be diverted at the pre-trial level and others at the pre-sentence level. The primary goal, according to this respondent, was to reduce institutional (prison) populations. Secondary goals were to improve screening mechanisms and referral sources. This same respondent said that parole was not included in the original ICFS plan because the purpose was to shut down the incoming population. This, however, is inconsistent with some early documentation which shows very clearly that parole was in fact included as part of early plans in LEAA for ICFS.

The other ex-LEAA official recalled the original premise of ICFS as being to test "if there is any difference between the amount of supervision that a particular individual on probation receives, vis-a-vis his recidivism rate" (that is, whether different amounts of supervision are associated with differing recidivism rates). Parole was eliminated, according to him, because of budgetary restraints and because of lack of interest in parole by the original applicants. In other words, parole was there originally, but simply dropped out. Later (internal memorandum) documentation on the elimination of parole indicated the following:

Although the delivery of services to both groups has many similarities there are sufficient differences in screening, selection and administrative processes to warrant focusing on probation services. In addition, the three agencies under current consideration for participation in the ICFS program are probation agencies. This being the case, it was felt that unnecessary confusion would be added to the program design if these agencies were requested to break with their normal service delivery procedures in order to include parolees.

One respondent indicated that one of the criteria for site selection was to be the emphasis which the applicant placed on a control model of probation. He stated that the control model of probation was to be one "which would categorize probationers in a certain level of supervision based upon the risk that they presented to the community; based upon a number of problems they had; the type of offense for which they were on probation; and, any previous history, that type of thing."

At least one other LEAA employee, this one with the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (the research arm of LEAA, later named the National Institute of Justice) asserted that the idea for ICFS originated in the Institute. It was, he stated, related to some work being done with career criminals and the Prosecutors Management Information System (PROMIS). He agrees on the idea of a control model of probation, however.

The other thing we wanted to do was test the notion of the control model of probation, that is, could you release only marginal types on probation, people who had kind of, in terms of marginal, the more risky to place on probation - people more likely to

go to prison. Could you place those marginal types on probation - rigid supervision program, and look for differences in that outcome [such that it] has improved for that group?

In any event, the next development that we were able to document was the release of a request for proposal (RFP) in January, 1977 by the LEAA's Office of Regional Operations. Entitled, "Improvement of Correctional Field Services Program", this RFP included three "subprogram" areas. One of these was the Control Model of Probation. According to the RFP, the LEAA sought, inter alia, with this model:

1. To reduce the crime rate of offenders under probation.
2. To assess the feasibility of making classification decisions that attempt to place offenders in programs according to an assessment of risk potential.
3. To provide a classification scheme that relies upon objective criteria that have been shown to be correlated with risk.
4. To maximize the control capacity ...
5. To ... provide different degrees of control over the offender.
6. To encourage the reorganization of probation departments toward matching offender types and alternative dispositions and toward a concern with control.

These aims obviously are consistent with the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Committee and Martinson's writings. The risk assessment requirement was consistent with the GAO recommendations. These possible influences may be further evident in the program strategy for the control model. Projects were "to develop and demonstrate a scheme whereby

offenders placed on probation " would be controlled "to keep to a minimum the number of crimes committed." The intent was to implement an "incapacitation model rather than a rehabilitation model for probation." The projects would provide "the necessary level of supervision needed for control based on the risk proneness of each offender." Each project had to have a screening mechanism which would "be reduced to a short checklist," and a range of probation alternatives.

These alternatives were to include six levels, as follows:

1. Probation with no supervision.
2. Probation with only monthly written reports required.
3. "Regular" probation with one or two contacts a month.
4. Supervision to the extent that one probation officer handles only 20 probationers, with at least one contact per day, and in which only surveillance is required of the officer -- no presentence investigation, counseling, etc.
5. Supervision to the extent that one probation officer handles only 5-10 probationers with at least two contacts per day.
6. Probation on condition of part-time or full-time residence in a correctional facility (e.g., drug program, halfway house, restitution house, etc.)

Finally, the request for proposals called for probation officers not to be involved in providing services (such as counseling, employment assistance), directly to their clients because "the project should provide primarily supervision; service should be incidental to the primary task." The purpose of the probation control model thus seemed very

clear, and also quite consistent with the themes developed earlier.

Some Takers Respond: Now What?

Fifteen proposals were received in response to the LEAA request. The later solicitation for the national evaluation (which was to be a part of ICFS) indicated the availability of four proposals to be used as background in the development of the evaluation proposal. These materials were forwarded to Rutgers (and others expressing interest in the solicitation) in late September, 1977. The four came from the Bureau of Community Corrections in Des Moines, Iowa; the New York State Division of Probation; the 16th Circuit Court Services in Kane County, Illinois; and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education/Corrections Program in Boulder, Colorado.

Each of the above proposals set forth a markedly different program and strategy. The Des Moines proposal focused upon service delivery to high/medium risk offenders with drug/alcohol/employment related problems. New York's application (dated May 13, 1977) proposed a control model of probation supervision. Kane County's application (dated May 5, 1977) proposed four surveillance models for probationers and two surveillance models for parolees. The WICHE proposal set forth a Community/Corrections Resources Management Team to provide surveillance and service for both probationers and parolees. Of these, the New York proposal seemed to us to be closely responsive to the LEAA solicitation in its

emphasis upon control and supervision, although the Kane County proposal reflected some of its elements.

Our interviews with personnel from New York and from Kane County shed some light on what their individual interests in ICFS were at that time, and what motivated them to apply. One New York official interviewed had been Deputy Director for Planning and Administration at the time their original proposal was submitted. His interest was very clearly in risk screening being done at the presentence level in order to help judges make sentencing decisions and to keep first offenders out of prison. The belief that many offenders now sent to prison could be safely kept in the community seemed to be a chief motivating factor.

The New York application reflected this focus. Its case plan said,

During the presentence investigation, any criminal case in which probation is a possible disposition will be rated on the base expectancy instrument. Where probation is recommended for cases in the very high risk category, that recommendation would specify that the individual should receive surveillance at Level I (Maximum Level) as a condition of probation.

Unfortunately for this idea, the LEAA solicitation did not call for the risk assessment to be done at the presentence level. Therefore, this aim could not be achieved through the LEAA envisioned control model of probation. Also of interest in New York's application is a reference to Martinson's notion of intensive supervision and deterrence. This

provides yet another link to the early conceptualization.

A second interviewee was the first New York project director who was responsible for the original and subsequent proposals from that site. He describes the control model as simply attempting "to separate out the surveillance function and the social service function of the probation officer's role." This model would create "a unit of officers who would focus upon surveillance," he said.

Three developments seemed to come together simultaneously in New York around that state's participation in the proposed project. The state independently was developing an intensive supervision program (ISP) for probationers in 22 of New York's larger counties; the prospective project director, a doctoral student at SUNY - Albany, was looking for a suitable doctoral dissertation topic; and, LEAA released its control model RFP. The latter two developments, in effect, resulted in the New York proposal being a reworked dissertation prospectus.

Kane County's initial interest in the project, according to the originator of its proposal, was in the opportunity to measure the frequency of contact, the length and nature of contact, whether contact was initiated by probation officer or probationer, and what were the effects of infrequent contacts with lower risk offenders. Again, the thought was that probation could offer an alternative to overcrowded prisons and that a screening mechanism could be employed before the offender was sentenced. The Kane County proposal specifically addressed some of the issues raised in the GAO and

Blue Ribbon Committee reports. It proposed, for example, to provide a field trial of a control model of probation.

The next piece in the available paper trail is the grant manager's memorandum to the assistant LEAA administrator dated September 27, 1977. It mentions Robert Martinson's "What Works?" article and the Blue Ribbon Committee and GAO reports as "forceful influence(s) on the development of this program." It stresses the theme of providing control to reduce recidivism.

The memorandum indicates that of the 15 applications received, five were selected as the best by a review panel of corrections experts. One proposal was withdrawn and two others subsequently were rejected "on the basis of duplication of services in existing programs and an unjustifiable expenditure of federal funds."<sup>19</sup> The grant manager's memo refers to some problems with differing lengths of project periods and "programmatic questions."

The New York and Kane County proposals were among the three finalists that were recommended for award. The third applicant recommended for an award was a dark horse. The Florida Salvation Army Corrections Department application was not in the final five recommended by the Review Committee. But, it was in the final three. The aforementioned memo says judiciously, "Although not selected by the panel of experts for further review, the Salvation Army application was deemed to be a unique applicant, of excellent merit, and

one which may have significant impact on the criminal justice system ... Further, the Salvation Army has a legislative mandate and many influential endorsements to carry out efforts in the field of corrections."20

One LEAA interview respondent seemed completely enthralled with the Salvation Army's Florida probation program. He said,

I think they were chosen because they had facilities statewide ... they had everything necessary to supervise and to assist offenders because it was already built into their whole social work system. And that generated one of the best applications, in my opinion, this agency's ever seen.

This particular LEAA official, no longer with the agency at the time of the interview, had tried previously to develop probation programs that would rely upon pre-existing services. He seemed enamored with the Salvation Army because they were willing to do what he thought should be done - namely, provide community-based services for offenders under a contractual arrangement. That concept may have merit, but it certainly is not the control model of probation.

Another LEAA official, however, implied that the award was made because of the endorsements. He said, "My impression was they got funded because of, for political reasons - solely ... the Salvation Army had a lot of IOU's that they may have collected on for this."21

It may be recalled that two proposals - from Des Moines, Iowa, and from WICHE - that were forwarded to the potential national evaluators were not in the final three, that from

the Salvation Army, however, was not sent. Thus, the evaluation plan could not be based on the objectives and circumstances of the Salvation Army program.

#### The Demise of the Control Model

While one unit in LEAA (the Office of Regional Operations) was recommending approval of the three projects which included probation and parole in Kane County, an emphasis upon pre-sentence screening in New York, and a contract service delivery mode in Florida, another LEAA unit (the National Institute) was raising criticisms.

On October 14, 1977, the Acting Director of NILECJ, Blair Ewing, wrote to the LEAA Acting administrator, James Gregg. He pointed out that, "the current group of proposals would not easily lend themselves to a test model because of the diversity in program components and program foci." "Specifically," Ewing said, "the three proposals do not present parallel projects." In fact, each of the recommended proposals differed from the original LEAA conceptual model, but in a different way. They also, as Ewing pointed out, differed considerably from each other.

Ewing proposed the remedy that a "test design group" be formed and convened in order "to develop a test model which simultaneously satisfies the original intent and needs of the project applicants and the Institute's concerns about project evaluation."

The noncomparability and divergence problems cited by Ewing were made more difficult because new proposals could not be solicited. If the program had to proceed with the three agencies already selected, then, as described by one interviewee, any changes would require "the good will of the project sites," since LEAA would not have "the luxury of a funding 'carrot'."

The National Institute Director proposed including, in the design group, the three project directors from the test sites. He also proposed including the Institute's evaluation grantee as a part of this design group (the national evaluator, however, was not chosen until nearly a year later). Also, it was proposed to offer the sites "a complete support training package." In other words, the projects would receive a bonus in technical assistance if they were willing to go along with the Institute's desired changes. Perhaps this bonus could improve the projects, and substitute partially for the lost funding carrot (but add to the overall cost of ICFS).

The response to Ewing's memo said in part: "The steps outlined ... offer a sound way of proceeding with this rather nebulous program ... and ... It is recognized that such an approach would entail some delays and a fair amount of negotiation, but it certainly would be a good way of salvaging the hodge-podge which currently exists."

"Nebulous" and "hodge-podge" do not seem to be optimistic

characterizations for an effort already budgeted to cost more than \$1 million; but LEAA seemed to be caught in an atmosphere of inevitability and irrevocability with regard to ICFS. And, unusual steps apparently were seen as necessary to put the planning on a more sound basis.

Our interviews with present and former LEAA officials disclosed some of what was going on behind the scenes as LEAA and ICFS crossed the Rubicon. It seems clear that there was considerable friction and tension between the Institute and the OCJP. The two offices had been directed by a LEAA deputy administrator to form a joint committee to design a program in the area of correctional field services. While this cooperative design process was going on, OCJP released their original control model design as an RFP without notifying the Institute. This was the January 21, 1977 release.

The head of OCJP at the time later refused to rescind the RFP, saying it was a public document, despite the protests of the Institute. From that point on the two offices sought to improve the plan through patchwork and make the best of what was described, as we have seen, as a "hodge-podge."

OCJP was supporting the control model of probation exemplified in the RFP, which essentially would augment the funds of the grantees to permit them to hire more personnel and to provide more and better supervision. In



this office, ICFS generally was seen as another LEAA discretionary action grant, not as an experiment. The Institute, on the other hand, wanted to discover whether or not variable levels of supervision for different offender risk groups made any difference in probation outcomes. They wanted an experiment. Thus, there was a basic philosophical conflict.

The later emphasis in LEAA seemed to focus on not "totally wasting the money" in the words of one LEAA respondent. This official told us, "... at the point everything had gone so far that OCJP was committed to fund. They couldn't just back off and say, 'Gee, we made a big goof and nobody's going to get any money.'" "ICFS," he says, "never had the benefit of (a) long-term developmental process."

On November 8th and 9th, 1977 letters were sent by Blair Ewing to each of the three project directors informing them that their application had been selected for further consideration and inviting them to a Washington planning meeting in late November. The letter indicated that their support and cooperation in modifying the original applications was being requested. The promise of "a complete support training package" was included in the letter.

A background paper prepared for the discussions set out the proposed changes in ICFS. These changes were in

the areas of sample selection (exclude parolees and perhaps certain probationers), case assignment (equal probability assignment to one of two proposed units), and supervision. The sole objective of ICFS, as proposed, would be to determine the effectiveness of probation screening procedures combined with differential levels of supervision.

The paper proposed four levels of supervision (high, high-medium, low-medium, and low). The high level called for daily personal contact initially, to be reduced after six months. Thus, one notion of the control model was at least still alive, that is, very intensive supervision and control.

On November 28th and 29th, 1977, four staff members from the Institute met with two persons from each of the three sites "to discuss program guidelines." There were no representatives from OCJP (the originators of the control model) at the meeting. As a result of these discussions, the ICFS program objective adopted was: "To determine the effectiveness of probation screening procedures combined with differential levels of supervision." Learning about the effects of risk screening and variable supervision became the primary goal of the program. There were to be three, rather than four, classifications for risk: high, medium, and low, and three (not four) levels of supervision: intensive, medium, and minimum. Thus, the Institute's position on the conceptual foundation for the project

was adopted.

Several other results from this meeting are particularly pertinent to understanding the operationalization and implementation of ICFS. Certain criteria were agreed upon to exclude some probationers from the project. These included drug or alcohol addiction, sex-related crimes, residential or work release program sentences, shock probation (use of incarceration prior to placement on probation), and probation terms of less than six months. (Although inclusion of these cases would have complicated the experiment, it is a fact that such persons are placed on probation in the "real world", and that such placements are evaluable. One ultimate effect of this decision is to limit generalizability of the findings from the evaluation to other jurisdictions).

All eligible probationers were to be screened for risk using a locally developed and *validated* risk screening mechanism.<sup>22</sup> It was decided also to exclude low risk clients from intensive supervision and high risk clients from minimum supervision. The former was apparently decided on humanitarian grounds, and the latter because of public safety concerns.

All probationers, with the above exceptions, were to be assigned to a level of supervision on an equal probability basis. This implied that each level of supervision would have equal numbers of probationers initially, but that the

medium level would swell with the addition of the low and high risk offenders reassigned to medium supervision as a result of the assignment constraint already described.

The adopted guidelines called for two supervision units. All eligible probationers screened for risk were to be assigned either to a Unit 1 (equal probability assignment to a level of supervision with the aforementioned restrictions) or a Unit 2 (assignment to a specific level of supervision based upon the screening results, with the restrictions). This procedure would create two experimental groups: one with one independent variable (level of supervision), and one with two independent variables (supervision level and risk level).

The agency representatives agreed to revise their ICFS grant applications in accordance with the proposed guidelines and to resubmit them. A major result of this meeting and the changes which derived from it was the near demise of the control model of probation as such. The closest thing to it left under the new guidelines was the intensive supervision category, which called for two personal, face-to-face contacts per week and two personal telephone contacts per week. The probationers closest to those originally envisioned as candidates for ICFS were to be those classified as being high risk.

ICFS: Act Two

The internal controversy in LEAA over ICFS continued

during the interim between the November agreements and the receipt and final approval of the three site applications. The deadline date for these applications was January 31, 1978.

The Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) in the Institute became involved in the discussions because of responsibility in that office for designing, funding, and monitoring what would be the so-called national evaluation of the three ICFS projects. On December 14, 1977, the Acting Director of OPE made some suggestions about the proposed ICFS design described above. One of these was the following:

... it is recommended that assignment to regular probation supervision (whatever that is in the project sites) be part of the test program. This is important to enable decision-makers to determine effectiveness of the test procedures as compared to what is presently being employed. It is suggested that this take the place of the proposed 'medium' supervision level.

He added that this was "most necessary if any comparison is to be made between the variations proposed and regular supervision."

This suggestion encompassed a very basic and vital requirement of experimental evaluation. In order to answer the question of whether something works, one must be able to answer the question, as compared to what? There must be some comparability, i.e., a control or comparison situation; and often it is useful to compare the results of a new program with the results expected from the usual procedures. This is exactly what the Director's memo was proposing.

A second suggestion in this same memo was to assure "... equal N's in the categories that the study is most interested in, i.e., high risk cases receiving intensive supervision and low risk cases receiving minimum supervision ...."

An answering memo from the project monitor of the ICFS sites, dated December 22, 1977, said: "... the ICFS program specifically avoided comparing 'normal' probation to the ICFS program. Such a comparison would be spurious since there is no commonly accepted definition of 'normal'. The design group opted to restrict comparisons to the three levels of supervision ...."

This very critical decision itself seems to have been based on a spurious argument. Whether there is or was a commonly accepted definition of normal probation seems irrelevant. There was some form of probation supervision ongoing in each of the three sites prior to the implementation of ICFS. This was, therefore, normal or regular probation at each site, and it could (we believe should) have served as the comparison situation. The concern about size of numbers in each cell was called "well-founded" by the project monitor. His answering memo indicated that the program guidelines would be modified to meet the concern.

A discussion paper dated January 5, 1978 was prepared to air design issues and proposed modifications. This paper stressed that one of the primary foci of the program

was "... the question of whether high risk probationers benefit, or do better, while on probation if subjected to intensive levels of supervision." Thus, an enfeebled control model still lived - at least in the minds of some. The paper further emphasized the importance of equivalent numbers of cases being assigned to each of the seven cells of the design. This would be accomplished by *random* assignment to the three levels of supervision after risk screening.<sup>23</sup> The low risk/intensive supervision and high risk/minimum supervision cells would be dropped from the study as agreed.

The discussion paper acknowledged the value of comparisons with "normal" levels of supervision but raised the problem that it would "lower the number of probationers in other cells." It also suggested that the low or medium supervision in the experiment could perhaps serve the same purpose since these would be similar to normal supervision. (This, however, is obviously not possible. Because medium supervision in the "experiment" is part of the "experiment", it cannot be construed as also being regular probation.)

Our interviews with LEAA officials and ex-officials raised this question and elicited the following responses. When asked, "do you know why there isn't a control group in any of the sites?", one respondent answered: "It was (the) feeling of the program coordination team that rather than, again, so much of it is not written down and we don't

have our normal test design documents, for some reason it wasn't felt that one was needed." Another said: "Now I can't tell you why the control may have gone out of the project. My suspicion would be it had something to do with the random assignment and if that's the reason, and if indeed that's what happened then I think we're at a big loss." A third interviewee speculated that it may have had something to do with sample size, i.e., requiring a control group would have substantially reduced the number of probationers in the experiment.

In March of 1978 (after the applications under the new guidelines were already received) several additional communications among various Institute offices reflected continuing tension. In a March 8th memorandum, the Office of Program Evaluation Director suggested to the project monitor that some further revisions be made in the program guidelines and indicated that "... we will expedite the selection of an evaluation contractor." This latter point is notable, since the national evaluator was to have been selected and in attendance at the November meetings more than three months earlier. This memorandum was answered the next day. The project monitor expressed concern that the OPE evaluation solicitations had not yet been mailed, despite a previous indication that this would be done during the last week of February. The monitor pointed out that "this extended delay in the

OPE procurement of an evaluation organization may significantly impair the evaluation quality." He further objected to what he called "continuing expectations for guidelines modification, re-write, etc." and he reminded the OPE Director that, "OPE has had the final approved version of the guidelines (prior to your requested modification) for over 60 days."

The Final Guidelines for the Improved Correctional Field Services Program (dated March 10, 1978) were signed-off by the design group and forwarded to the Director, OPE on March 14, 1978. These guidelines emphasized an expeditious selection of the evaluation contractor since, it was "anticipated that the selection of a contractor and program implementation will occur simultaneously." The final guidelines were substantially the same as those produced the previous November.

A March 28, 1978 memorandum stipulated certain special conditions for approval of the three applications. These conditions included LEAA approval of the base expectancy (risk) instrument and data system to facilitate evaluation. Special note was made of the Florida program. "This program," said the memo, "may be in most need of the training to be offered by our support contractor and we should plan on making this a priority effort." Finally, the memorandum indicated that the two unit design developed earlier would be collapsed into a single unit using random

assignment after risk assessment. No reason was given for this change.

Each of the projects finally was approved in June, to commence at the beginning of July, 1978. The grant approval memorandum pointed to the interest in "the system's ability to deal with high risk offenders in the community," and indicated that ICFS was responsive "to the concern for public safety." Vestiges of the control model! The approval memorandum called for a four to six month planning period during which the risk screening mechanisms were to be developed and validated; necessary operating manuals and guidelines were to be developed; program management and service delivery staff were to be trained; and, necessary reporting and information forms (for the evaluation) were to be developed.

The grant solicitation for the ICFS national evaluation (dated August 12, 1977) raised, for the first time, a number of additional concepts with regard to this project. The evaluation objectives were to include recidivism (including nature, seriousness, and degree of success), social adjustment and cost. The introduction of these concepts reflected a further change or shift in the conceptualization of aims by the NILECJ. Social adjustment was particularly far removed from the now nearly defunct control model.

This completes the descriptive overview of ICFS during its conceptual and planning stage. The actual implementation

and outcomes are described in other reports. The significance and implications of the developments need to be assessed. The events just described, taking place over a period of approximately four years, are summarized in Table 1. They have profound implications for what will be likely outcomes from ICFS. This is especially true of the events of the two years immediately preceding implementation. The most significant of the events and implications follow Table 1.



Table 1

Sources of Innovative Orientation and Action in Development  
of the Improved Correctional Field Services Project

Date	Basic Concept(s)	Source
1953- 1965	Smaller parole caseloads will be effective in reducing recidivism; low risk offenders may be given minimal supervision with no increase in recidivism; high risk offenders given intensive supervision will not increase recidivism.	California Department of Corrections Parole and Community Services Division (Special Intensive Parole Unit Program, Phases I - IV); and California Department of Correctional Effectiveness Program; California Department of Corrections Work Unit Program.
1965- 1967	Intensity of Supervision is related to probation outcomes.	United States Probation Office, Northern District of California (San Francisco Project).
1974- 1976	Intensive supervision will have a deterrent effect.	Robert Martinson.
1975	Reduce crime by control, supervision, and voluntary participation in rehabilitation programs; classify probationers by degree of supervision and control needed; high rates of revocation, with intensive supervision, indicates system efficiency.	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Blue Ribbon Committee on Corrections.

Table 1 (continued)

Date	Basic Concept(s)	Source
1975-1976	Probation prediction methods should be used to assist in decisions concerning placement on probation, determination of level of supervision, and early release; public safety emphasized.	General Accounting Office
1976-1978	Develop risk classification methods and use in diversion to reduce institutional populations; test relation of supervision levels to recidivism rates; develop control model of probation based on risk classification and differential supervision.	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (Project Design Group (?)) Office of Regional Operations
1976 (?)	Develop control model of probation, with high risk offenders diverted from prison but rigidly supervised; high risk offenders rigidly supervised will have better outcomes than if imprisoned.	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (?)
1977	Control model of probation, with the aim of crime reduction: Classify offenders by risk for differential program placement with differing degrees of control; provide valid prediction (risk classification) from objective factors; maximize the control capacity of correctional field supervision; reorganize probation to match offender types with dispositions for improved control; emphasize incapacitation rather than rehabilitation.	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Office of Regional Operations.

Table 1 (continued)

Date	Basic Concept(s)	Source
May, 1977	Control model of probation, with aims of deterrence, provision of information for sentencing, and diversion from prison; intensive supervision for high risk cases; separate surveillance and social service functions.	New York State Division of Probation.
ca May, 1977	Provide specialized services through varied supervision structures for misdemeanor probationers with the aims of reducing the numbers of felony offenders, reducing jail and prison overcrowding, and redirect offenders to become law-abiding and contributing citizens; screen probationers as to both needs and risk and provide differential levels of supervision.	Salvation Army, Correctional Services Department, Florida.
Aug., 1977	Evaluate Improved Correctional Field Services Project(s) based on risk screening and differential levels of supervision, with respect to recidivism, levels of offense seriousness, social adjustments, and cost.	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.
Sept., 1977	(Re-emphasis of control model of probation: emphasis on control of the offender to reduce recidivism.)	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Office of Regional Operations.
Oct., 1977	Develop test model with consistent aims in each site, then evaluate by means of an experiment	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

Table 1 (continued)

Date	Basic Concept(s)	Source
Nov., 1977	Determine effectiveness of probation risk screening and differential levels of supervision.	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

## Assessment and Implications

1. The control model of probation was scrapped, and the dimensions of risk and levels of supervision were adopted as the focus of the study. Whether or not Martinson's deterrence theory of probation or the views of the Blue Ribbon Committee and the General Accounting Office study team have any merit cannot be tested by the final ICFS design. The only remnant of the control model left is the intensive supervision level, particularly as it is used with high risk probationers. Unfortunately, the high risk classification was curtailed by the exclusion of certain offenders - addicts, sex offenders, residential placements and shock-probation cases - of whom many might have been classified as being high risk. The examination of levels of supervision was limited further by prohibiting the assignment of low risk cases into the intensive supervision level and of high risk cases into the minimal supervision category.
2. Random assignment across the three levels of supervision was not required. The result is a medium level of supervision which is unnaturally large since it absorbs all "misassigned" high and low risk cases.<sup>24</sup> Two cell interactions useful for the evaluation were lost. The unspecified "humanitarian" reasons for not assigning low risk cases to intensive supervision are not particularly compelling. The "public safety" reasons

for not assigning high risk cases to minimum supervision may be even less so since minimum supervision (one face-to-face contact per month) is the equivalent of usual supervision in many probation jurisdictions, including the three ICFS sites, and including, of course, those classified by new procedures as "high risk." This decision rule also may attribute greater validity to the risk assessment instruments than warranted; and it is a rule adopted before any of the instruments had been validated.

3. There was no requirement of an experimental design. The inability to compare the experimental condition to any normal or regular condition is perhaps the greatest single delimiting factor in the plan finally adopted. The absence of a design in which comparisons would be possible limits severely, for example, the ability to make judgements about cost-effectiveness of the classification - supervision process compared with regular probation. This is a powerful impediment to generalization and implementation - in the test sites, or elsewhere.
4. There was no requirement for individual project evaluations. (Suffolk County planned for some internal evaluation even though it was not required.) This results in a loss of information and knowledge which might have been derived from the diversity of the

projects and the uniqueness of some of their aspects.

It also results in an absence of self-interest in data collection which might have been stimulated by individual evaluation requirements. These individual evaluations could have meshed very easily with and enhanced the national evaluation.

5. The evaluation contractor was not selected in a timely fashion during the planning and design phase. Not only was this delayed nearly a year, but the evaluation planning phase could not commence until four months after the individual projects became operational. The consequent need to play catch-up proved to be a great detriment to the evaluation. The first cohort of Florida cases (intake prior to May, 1979) was lost to the evaluation since the project site did not keep adequate records. In addition, national evaluation requirements became perceived as much more intrusive than would have been necessary if implementation and evaluation planning had commenced simultaneously and proceeded in a collaborative fashion.
6. The Salvation Army Corrections Department in Florida was selected as a grantee. Funding the Florida project could not be justified as responsive to the original control model concept. Because of the unique Florida arrangement, by which the Salvation Army contracts with the state to administer misdemeanor

probation, there is a severely restricted chance of generalizing from the Florida results to any typical probation agency. The probation operation in Florida is quite atypical in the field of probation. One of the constraints upon the evaluation which arose from this situation was that the Salvation Army is outside the normal criminal justice information mainstream. Information regularly collected and maintained by state or county probation agencies, for example, arrest reports and criminal history data, are not usually collected by the Salvation Army. The absence of such basic and critical information markedly exacerbated the usual problems of data collection for the evaluation. The fact that Florida's program is limited by statute to misdemeanants means that there are few if any "high risk" offenders in the usual sense of that term. Although it is obviously possible to classify some misdemeanor probationers as high risk according to a risk screening device, in relation to the Florida misdemeanor probation population, it is only in this quite relative sense that they can be regarded as high risk. Further, the facts that the Salvation Army has a statewide program and has only misdemeanants (with relatively short probation terms) means that the Florida site can be expected to have more than two-thirds of the total offenders in the project.



7. The shifts in conceptual foundation and purposes left confusion between the National Institute and the evaluators on the one hand, and the Office of Criminal Justice Programs and the sites on the other, as to whether or not ICFS was to be an experiment. The former clearly foresaw the project as experimental. However, a somewhat different perception by the sites and their LEAA monitor resulted in a lesser concern for adherence to the experimental design and the treatment plan. In their view, this was an action research project -- with the emphasis on action.

This history provides the context within which the final results from ICFS should be interpreted and understood. It permits also some analysis in terms of the typology of sources of innovation and action summarized at the outset.

#### Source of Innovation

In the case of ICFS, the problem was defined initially by an external agency, namely LEAA. The three probation agencies responded to this definition by adapting it to their own needs and situations. This step was represented by the first LEAA solicitation for proposals and the first round of applications.

At that point in early 1977, the Suffolk County and Kane County interests were relatively consonant with those of LEAA, at least with the Office of Criminal Justice Programs in LEAA. Suffolk County was very interested in the control

model of probation, and Kane County was very interested in and had already done considerable work on risk assessment. Florida's interests in increasing probation service delivery by adding counselors were not aligned at all with the control and surveillance emphasis of LEAA.

After the revisions in ICFS in late 1977, the control model (Suffolk's key concern) was nearly eliminated. The new ICFS was still divergent from Florida's real interests; but because risk assessment remained, ICFS II continued to be of prime interest to Kane County.

The solutions to the problem were proposed by the sites, but within the narrowly constructed framework of the LEAA guidelines for ICFS. The practical reality was that whereas each site developed its own proposals, if these proposed solutions did not fit the guidelines, the sites would not get funded. The three sites, therefore, offered LEAA the solution that agency desired. To the degree that the LEAA solution differed from the agency's own solutions, to that extent the solution too was external. If the hypothesis about the source of innovation being a determinant of program success is valid, we can anticipate that the most likely successful implementation would seem to be in Kane County, where the degree of divergence in problem definition was smallest. Next would be Suffolk County with a somewhat larger divergence. Last would be Florida, where the greatest degree of divergence existed.

### Source of Action

After receiving funds in mid-1978, the three probation agencies began to take action to implement what was mainly an external solution to an externally defined problem. In this sense, the action was imposed upon the institution (the probation agencies). This imposition was further reinforced by the presence of an external national evaluator whose role, in part, was to help ensure adherence to the integrity of the program design, that is, to make sure that the solution was applied the way LEAA wanted it applied. Again, successful implementation could be assumed to be most probable in Kane County, and least probable in Florida. Why? Because Kane County was doing what they most wanted to do, and Florida was not.

We have traced here the events which triggered ICFS, and elsewhere we have assessed its preliminary results. Without even considering these results, several things seem clear, from its history. First, the nature of ICFS as it moved through its various phases did change dramatically. ICFS did not turn out to be a control model of probation; it was not a program to test alternatives to incarceration; and, it was not a program to help judges in their sentencing decisions. Further, because of the policy decision not to require a control or comparison situation, there was little chance of determining whether risk assessment and differential supervision influenced probation outcomes in ways different

from and better than normal or regular probation.

All this, of course, does not mean that nothing can be learned; and in companion reports we have sought to assess the effects of the projects in terms of the objectives specified when the projects finally were implemented. Aside from that evaluation, however, three conclusions for research and action planning seem inescapable:

1. The initial planning and development of test programs of the type discussed here should take place in a single agency or unit. Much of the debate as to aims, and a good bit of confusion, stemmed in this case example from planning in two units with different missions—the ORP (an action program) and the NILECJ (a research program). It should be noted that subsequent to the history described here the development of such programs has been placed in one unit of the National Institute. Thus, the problems noted may not be ascribed to the present structure in the Institute.
2. A closer collaboration among the thinkers (the originators of the innovative orientation), the doers (the persons expected to provide the innovative action), and the critics (the evaluators) must somehow be achieved.
3. Pilot feasibility studies, as part of the planning, to ensure a high probability of successful implementation — often proposed but often neglected — have much to recommend them.

Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Wilkins, L. T. and Gottfredson, D. M., Research, Demonstration, and Social Action, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, March, 1969.
- <sup>2</sup>See, for example, Gottfredson, D. M., "The Practical Application of Research," Canadian Journal of Corrections, 5, 212, 1963; Havel, J., Special Intensive Parole Unit, Phase IV: A High Base Expectancy Study, Sacramento, California: Department of Corrections, June, 1963.
- <sup>3</sup>Martinson, R., "What Works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform," The Public Interest, 35, 22, 1974.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 48.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 47.
- <sup>6</sup>Lohman, J. D., et. al. "The Intensive Supervision Caseloads: A Preliminary Evaluation." The San Francisco Project: A Study of Federal Probation and Parole Research Report No. 11. School of Criminology, University of California, March, 1967.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup>Martinson, p. 47.
- <sup>9</sup>Martinson, R., "California Research at the Crossroads," Crime and Delinquency, April, 1976.
- <sup>10</sup>One information collection method used in our study of the history of ICFS was a series of 20 interviews, conducted during the summer of 1979 by Ms. Janet Storti. Interviewees included present (as of that time) and former LEAA and NIJ officials, and project personnel and responsible administrators from each of the three action sites.
- <sup>11</sup>This was Mr. Peter Veldi.
- <sup>12</sup>Recommendation of the Consultant Committee on Corrections, September 5, 1975.
- <sup>13</sup>Idem., p. 15.
- <sup>14</sup>Idem., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Idem., p. 16.

<sup>16</sup>United States General Accounting Office, State and County Probation: Systems in Crisis, May 27, 1976. p. 74.

<sup>17</sup>Idem., p. v.

<sup>18</sup>Idem., p. 56.

<sup>19</sup>Grant Manager's Memorandum, "Applications submitted under 'Improvement of Correctional Field Services Program'." September 27, 1977.

<sup>20</sup>Emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup>The revised Florida application included a nine page program narrative and an extensive appendix including: a description of the existing program, a copy of the enabling legislation, and support letters from 15 judges, seven senators, eight representatives, and others.

<sup>22</sup>Emphasis is the authors'.

<sup>23</sup>Emphasis is the authors'.

<sup>24</sup>"Misassigned" as used here does not denote an error. This term was used in project discussions to designate high and low risk cases who would have been assigned to intensive or minimal supervision except for the corrections against it.