A National Perspective on Responding to Parole Violations
Responses to Parole Violations Traditionally....

• Very little attention or visibility
• Very little policy
• Great discretion on the part of parole officers
• Monitor offenders…when the PO thought it appropriate, bring the violator back to the Board
Attention has become more intense...

- Growth in prison populations
- Growth in the number and proportion of admissions to prison as a result of parole revocation—doubling between 1992 and 2002
- Growth in the parole population—which is “at risk” of return to prison
Figure 1: Trends in Release from Federal and State Prisons and Returns for Violating Parole or Other Conditions

- **Red Line**: Offenders Released
- **Yellow Square**: Offenders reincarcerated for violating parole or other release conditions
Early Focus on Responses to Violations...

- Work with parole boards on release decisionmaking led to a focus on violations and revocations—by the early 1990’s --8 states

- Focus was primarily on:
  - Consistency
  - “Intermediate” sanctions for violations
  - Objective scales to assess severity and risk
  - Responses mostly about consistency and proportionality
  - Goals: accountability and incapacitation
Today, the Trend is Toward Evidence-Based Violation Decisionmaking

• Responses designed to REDUCE risk, not simply manage or contain risk
• Looks to the principles of evidence-based practice to identify responses at a level of intensity and intrusiveness that corresponds to level violation severity, offender risk AND need
• Goal is to reduce the likelihood of reoffending—not only to contain the risk
Additional Information

- Innovations
- Tools/Practices/Strategies
- Implications for Supervision
- Summary of “new direction”
Examples of Innovations in Other States

• Kansas—mounting a state-wide “risk reduction” initiative that began with a focus on the parole population and reducing returns to prison for technical violations, and reducing the incidence of criminal violations

• Georgia—using specific “tracks” of parolees based on assessed needs and giving parole officers tools to measure progress (among 8 other TPC States)

• New Jersey—focusing supervision on criminogenic needs, structured guidance for parole officers
What Types of Tools, Practices

• Scaling of violation behavior—shared understanding of the importance of various types of non-compliance
• Use of empirically-based risk assessment tools to identify risk of parolee
• Case plans that identify specific programs, interventions appropriate to a parolee’s criminogenic needs—interventions can be drawn from these
• Categories of “responses” from which parole officers select appropriate actions for a specific parolee, violation, level of risk and need
• Clarity about when a PO has discretion, when a Supervisor must approve
Parole practitioners...

• Have come to understand the limitations of incapacitation as a response to violations;
• Are in the process of putting in place new practices that:
  ➢ Expect compliance and hold offenders accountable;
  ➢ Scale responses based upon severity of the violation and risk of the parolee;
  ➢ Seek to enhance successful completion of parole and reduced victimization;
  ➢ Use the principles of evidence-based practice
This means....we are moving

- From risk management—surveillance, containment, incapacitation

- To risk reduction—taking actions to reduce risk, focusing on high-risk offenders and their criminogenic needs
For parole supervision...

• It’s not just about monitoring compliance and returning the non-compliant….it’s about using responses targeted by risk…to REDUCE future offending.
Parole supervision has a critical role to play in responding to violations...

- Authority over the critical period just after release
- Tools of parole lend themselves to using the lessons of research to increase success—target by risk
- Critical “pressure point” of the system
Current interest is on:

• Successful reentry including reductions in recidivism, and

• Responses to violations that enhance public safety by using resources wisely and using interventions associated with reductions in recidivism
We see practice emerging to:

• Develop and use research-based decision tools
• Target interventions by risk and need—for both high and low risk offender
• Create incentives for successful reentry
• Set and manage conditions for SUCCESS
• Targeted, problem-solving approaches to violations
Key Messages

• A successful strategy to respond to parole violations is about public safety and is a core mission for parole;
• The lessons of research provide important guidance