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## REDUCING HOMICIDE BY ENHANCING HIGH-RISK PROBATION AND PAROLE: A Peer-Reviewed Grants Program

**Summary.** The growth of homicide in American cities is highly concentrated among young people on probation and parole. In Philadelphia in 2006, for example, over 22% of the murder arrests, and 16% of the murder victims, were clients of the Adult Probation and Parole Department (APPD) of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania. Virtually all were under 25 years of age. But they were needles in the haystack of the 52,000 people assigned to the 285 APPD officers. New statistical techniques can identify the highest-risk offenders under community supervision. A national program of competitive grants to apply those techniques in ways that can prevent homicide among high-risk likely killers (or victims) could be the most direct route to lowering homicide through federal policy.

### **Crime in Philadelphia and the APPD**

Homicide in Philadelphia has risen by over 25% in the past three years, to a total of 406 murders last year. Many if not most of these murders were committed by or against people who were under court supervision at the time as probationers, parolees or pre-trial releasees—possibly as many as 75% of the murders. For just the local adult probation and parole department (APPD) cases, two numbers stand out:

55 = the number of APPD cases who were murdered by gun in 2006

53 = the number of APPD cases who were arrested in 2006 for murder by gun

To convert these numbers to appropriate percentages, two separate denominators are required: the number of murders by gun, and the number of arrests for murders by gun. The Philadelphia Inquirer total of 344 gun murders in 2006 ([http://inquirer.philly.com/graphics/murders\\_map/](http://inquirer.philly.com/graphics/murders_map/)) provides the first denominator, which is 85% of all murders reported in Philadelphia in 2006. The APPD Gun Court records of 235 arrests for homicide by firearm in 2006 (regardless of the year in which the homicide was committed) provides the second denominator. Using these denominators produces the following findings:

- APPD cases were killed in 55 of all 344 gun homicides in 2006, or 16%
- APPD cases were arrested in 53 of the 235 murder arrests for 2006, or 22%

Because the majority of homicides do not lead to an arrest, it seems likely that even more of the offenders in these cases are APPD cases. A rough estimate based on a 50% clearance rate would be that APPD cases would have committed 22% of all 2006 murders, or almost 100—in addition to the 55 APPD cases who were killed. This would mean that almost 4 out of ten murders involved an APPD case as victim or offender.

In 2006 the City of Philadelphia’s 406 homicides yielded a rate of 270 homicides per million people. If we calculate the homicide victimization rate for the APPD, based on a caseload of 52,000 people, the comparable number would be 1,000 per million. If people among APPD’s 52,000 cases *committed* the estimated (solved and unsolved) 100 murders, the roughly comparable number for the homicide commission rate (assuming one offender per homicide) would be 1,920 per million people.

This means that

- The homicide victimization rate for APPD cases is four times the city-wide rate
- The homicide offending rate for APPD cases is seven times the city-wide rate

None of this should be surprising, since recently convicted offenders are well-known to be more likely to commit murder than other people. Nor does it mean that this murder rate is caused by any aspect of APPD’s operation within the standard US interpretation of the probation mission. Its significance, rather, comes from the fact that APPD cases provide a prime focus for homicide prevention. In contrast to programs that spread a wide net over low-risk and high-risk people alike, APPD is a program that is far more tightly focused on the higher risk Philadelphians who disproportionately suffer, and commit, the city’s homicides.

The APPD is not the only agency with a high-risk caseload. As a community supervision agency, it shares this challenge with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, as well as with two other First Judicial District agencies: Juvenile Probation and Pre-Trial Services Division. Collectively, these agencies supervise almost 1 out of every 15 of the 1.5 estimated Philadelphia residents. Their respective caseloads are as follows

| <u>Agency</u>      | <u>Persons Supervised</u> | <u>Percent of Total Supervised</u> |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| APPD               | 52,000                    | 54%                                |
| Pre-Trial Division | 30,000                    | 31%                                |
| Juvenile           | 5,000                     | 5%                                 |
| State Parole       | 9,000                     | 9%                                 |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>96,000</b>             | <b>100%</b> (with rounding)        |

This analysis of crime, and especially homicide, in Philadelphia suggests that the caseloads of these other agencies are also at high risk of committing murder or being murdered. If the risks are equal across offenders in the caseloads of all agencies, barring some adjustments for overlapping caseloads, the analysis suggests that offenders under supervision could jointly account for 44% of murder offenders and 32% of murder victims. Adding these two statistics could mean that *as many as 76% of all murders in Philadelphia involve convicted or charged offenders under supervision of community supervision agencies.*

If three out of four of all murders occur in a population required by law to be in constant communication with court-appointed supervisors, it seems important to ask whether our City is making the most of the opportunity such supervision provides to prevent those murders. This question can be broken down into several specific questions:

- Are some supervised offenders more at risk than others?
- Are there ways to re-allocate a constant budget based on risk?
- Would more probation officers for high-risk cases reduce murder?

The answer to all three questions is “yes.” The following sections document the basis for that answer, in the context of describing options for a re-engineering of APPD. A similar approach, of course, could also be taken with other offender supervision agencies, including—with a broader definition—the Philadelphia Police Department.

## **Risk Analysis: Old and New**

“Are some supervised offenders more at risk than others?” That is the old way to ask the question. The term “risk,” when defined, usually meant at risk of repeat offending, repeat arrest, or repeat conviction for a new offense. Any new offense. Regardless of the level of harm a new crime caused, or how many years in prison it would require to punish it, or whether a child was harmed, or any other criteria of seriousness, the standard risk assessment tools in probation give the same answer. Both shoplifting and homicide receive the same weight. So, too, do auto theft and kidnapping children for sexual assaults. The “old,” and still dominant, approach to risk analysis in probation and parole across the US does not distinguish different levels of risk by different levels of seriousness.

What the old approach does do is to distinguish levels of probability. Risk assessment tools focused on recidivism are able to classify offenders based on high, medium or low risks of repeat offending of any sort. This process certainly addresses a key question, but without the component of seriousness. In the following diagram, it is apparent that for someone to be at “high risk” to the community, at least in colloquial discussion, they must be both highly likely to commit an offense, and the offense they commit must be highly harmful. Rather than lumping together categories 3 and 4, as mapped by the diagram, what the community may prefer is that their tax dollars be heavily invested in category 4—with commensurate reduction of investment in the other three categories.

## Priorities for Offender Risk Assessment

| Likelihood of New Crime | Harmfulness of New Crime | Harmfulness of New Crime |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                         | Low                      | High                     |
| Low                     | 1                        | 2                        |
| High                    | 3                        | 4                        |

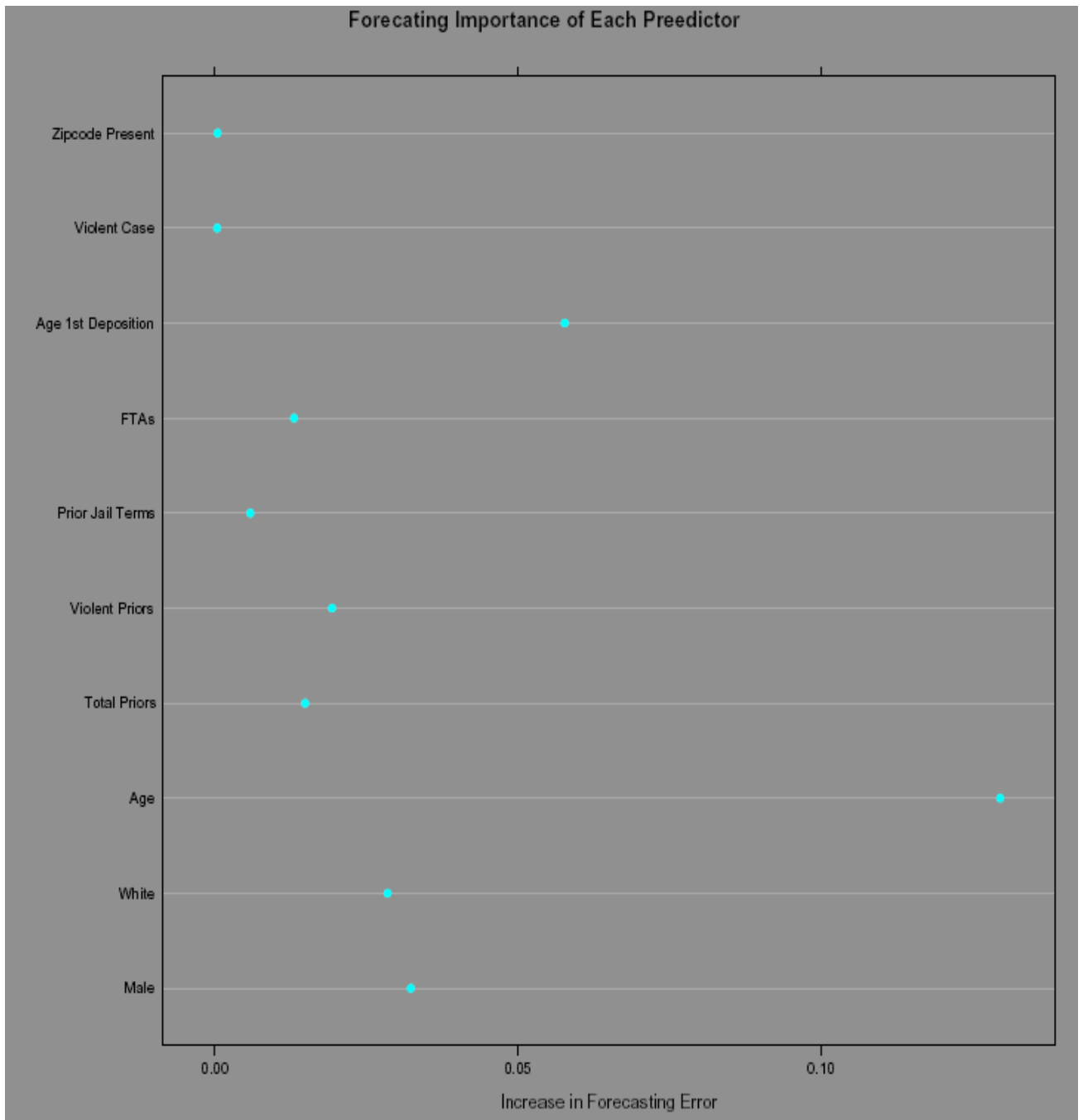
A new approach to risk assessment, in contrast, focuses solely on category 4 above. Using advanced data mining tools made possible by the advent of inexpensive supercomputers, the University of Pennsylvania has provided APPD with a new means of identifying offenders under its supervision who are most likely to be charged with murder or attempted murder. Based initially on all 519,168 cases assigned to APPD on electronic record for 1969-2005, the data on which these analyses are based are currently drawn entirely from more recent (21<sup>st</sup> Century) data.

These new risk assessments, developed under grants from the University of Pennsylvania, the Jerry Lee Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, are the first of their kind ever offered to a probation agency. Their development has been led by Philadelphia’s own Richard Berk, a Professor of Criminology and Statistics recently recruited by Penn from UCLA. Working in collaboration with the research staff of the APPD and other criminologists at Penn’s Jerry Lee Center of Criminology Professor Berk has focused on ways to distinguish probationers most likely to be charged with murder (or attempted murder) from those who are not. His analysis can identify APPD cases who are up to 42 times more likely to be charged with such offenses than other probationers, on average. By using a range of information already found in the offenders’ criminal histories, these tools forecast homicide risks among individual probationers and parolees using statistical methods similar to those employed in hurricane forecasting: identifying rare events, like needles in a haystack.

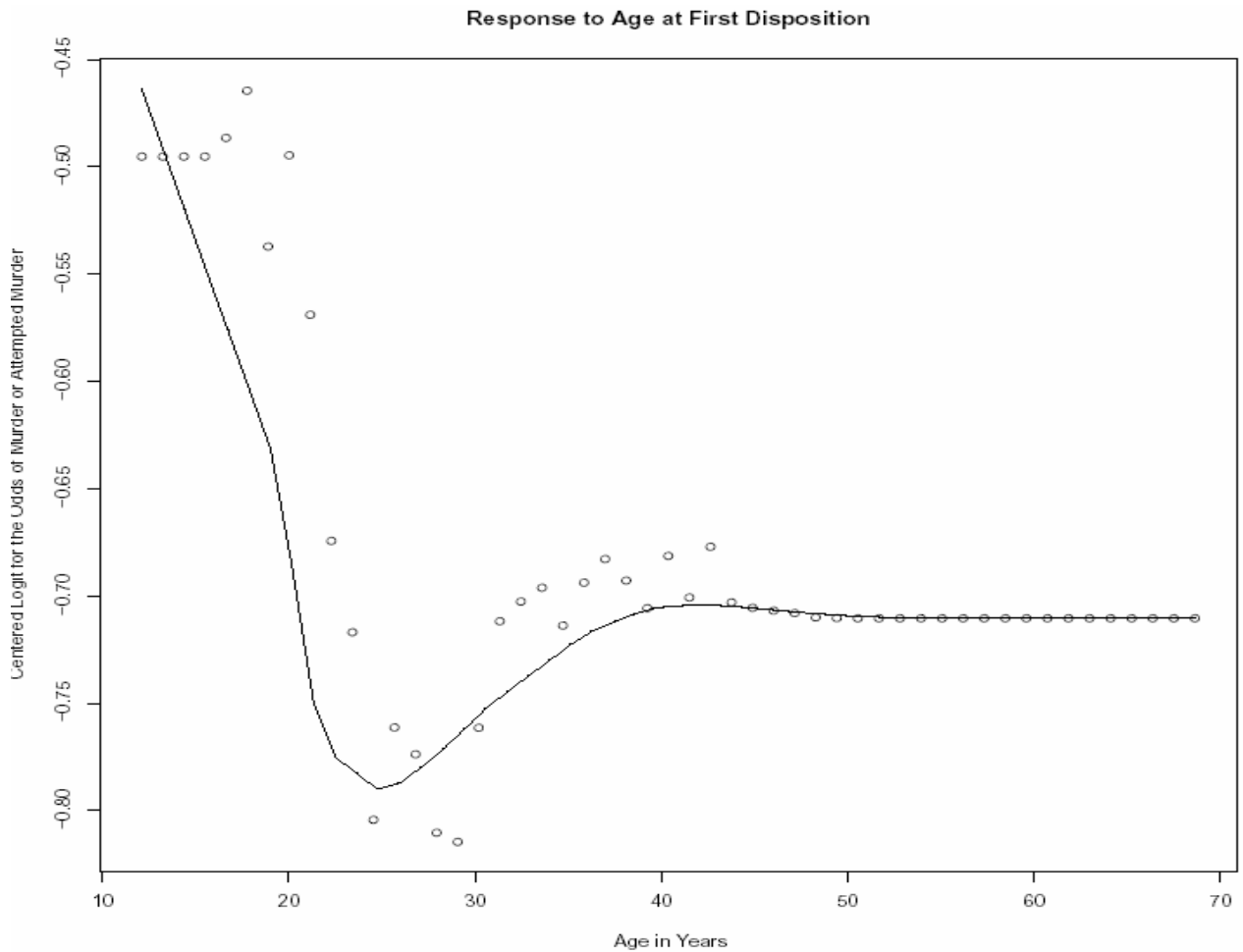
These statistical assessments yield an equation that identifies, in each case, a likelihood assessment based on each of the risk factors examined. It then takes all of the risk factors into account in a kind of statistical “parliament” adding up the yeas and nays on all the factors, with a summary score that identifies the estimated risk level for each case. The equation is derived from one large sample, and then use to predict the results for another large sample with a high degree of accuracy. By testing the model with actual cases of homicide and attempted homicide (as well as APPD cases not leading to such charges), the equation offers great confidence in forecasting homicide charges in the future.

The relative predictive power of each of the risk factors in one of the earlier versions of the analysis is depicted in the following graph presented by Richard A. Berk at the American Society of Criminology last November. Each dot reflects the degree of error

that deleting the risk factor would add to the overall model—a reverse statement of how important the factor is to making the model accurate.



The analysis shows, for example, the substantial importance of age at first adult prosecution (labeled in the above graph as “first deposition”) or “disposition,” regardless of whether a conviction resulted. The younger someone is when they are direct-filed on adult charges, the more likely that makes them to be charged with homicide or attempted homicide after being assigned as an APPD case. The following graph prepared by Dr. Berk for the 2006 ASC Meetings in Los Angeles depicts this relationship.



From these and many other analyses of APPD data, some APPD cases are clearly far more at risk of causing serious harm to the community than others. When that harm is defined as homicide, the probability that some will—and others won't—becomes so great that the APPD cases provide an extreme version of the city at large. In the Philadelphia population, APPD cases (and community supervision cases generally) pose much greater risk to the community than others. Within APPD cases, the difference is even more extreme.

By focusing on the cases most likely to commit the most serious offense—homicide—the APPD now has access to what may be the most advanced risk assessment tool in the country. Not even New York has yet moved beyond the analysis of recidivism for any offense type, despite its many advances in risk analysis. What New York does have, however, is a model for how to use risk analysis to restructure operations in order to invest more resources in its highest-risk cases.

## **The New York Experience**

Since the mid-1990s, the New York City Probation Department has divided its cases into two categories based on probability of recidivism. The low probability cases include about 75% of the caseload, according to NYC Probation Commissioner Martin Horn. Both Commissioner Horn and some 30 of his highest-level officials came to Philadelphia last September to demonstrate their management system in the Ceremonial Courtroom at City Hall. These low probability cases are assigned to probation officers with a caseload of 500 offenders per officer. The reason such a high caseload is feasible is that the probationers perform their regular visits with computers rather than the officer.

On each visit, a low-risk probationer logs on to a computer screen by placing his or her palm flat upon the screen. This biometric identification triggers a response in the probationer's language (English or four others), either in words on the screen or—if the offender is coded as illiterate—in audio. The computer then asks the probationer the same questions that a human probation officer would usually ask: a checklist of items updating the probationer's home address, employment, compliance with probation conditions, and other matters. If the probationer has failed a drug test or been arrested since the last visit, the act of placing the palm on the screen triggers a notice to a security officer to come into the room where the probationer is standing to take the probationer into custody. In such cases, the probation officer managing the probationer will take appropriate action.

Because such actions are required so rarely, it is possible for one officer to supervise 500 low-risk probationers. And because this caseload allows many other officers to manage caseloads of 50 or less, the offenders at higher risk of recidivism get more attention. The time for this attention allows more intensive planning and action about how to turn the probationer's life around, from education to job training to job placement and mental health or drug treatment services.

The ten years of experience with this approach in New York has been enhanced by the growth of data-driven management systems, focused on a monthly meeting reviewing performance trends in each component unit managing the caseload. These management systems track the use of resources, the meeting of operational goals (such as completion of pre-sentence reports on time), and the failure rates of probationers—including the rate at which they are arrested for murder.

These systems are impressive and promising in their potential application to Philadelphia. The recent implementation of CPCMS in the First Judicial District makes the adaptation of such a COMP-STAT-like system even more feasible for Philadelphia. What New York can offer as a model is impressive. But so is what Philadelphia has recently initiated.

## **Recent Philadelphia Initiatives in Adult Probation and Parole**

In April of 2005, the APPD co-chiefs initiated the planning process for a partnership with the University of Pennsylvania's Jerry Lee Center of Criminology. This process led to a

data sharing agreement in November of 2005, and the approval of the Penn Violence Reduction Partnership (PVRP) by the FJD's Administrative Governing Board in early 2006. In August of 2006, the FJD announced the PVRP's homicide prevention initiative under a special appropriation from the Philadelphia City Council, sponsored by former City Councilman Michael Nutter. In addition, Governor Rendell signed the state budget directing the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to fund a research grant in support of the APPD initiative. In combination with \$500,000 from the Jerry Lee Foundation, the \$500,000 in city and state funding brought the APPD homicide prevention initiative to \$1,000,000 in first-year funding.

These funds have been spent to refine the forecasting model for murder and attempted murder, especially by employing the revised data from the CPCMS system. More important, they have been used to launch the 5-officer Strategic Anti-Violence Unit (SAV-U). In weekly meetings held since January 2006, Penn criminologists and APPD officials have met at the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology to develop and plan the SAV-U protocol implemented January 1, 2007. Since then, the APPD's SAV-U has developed and tested its protocol for supervising a randomly selected sample of the highest-risk people in the APPD caseload. The elements of this protocol include the following:

- Low Caseloads—from 3 to 15 cases per officer
- Psychiatric assessments for each case by a Penn psychiatric social worker
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy provided by Penn for indicated cases
- Educational and literacy support as needed
- Targeted patrols by two plainclothes PPD officers and one probation officer to each case each week, on both scheduled and unscheduled occasions.
- Weekly and up to daily contacts between the probation officer and the case
- Preparation and support for re-entry if the case client is incarcerated
- Assistance in locating housing, drug treatment or other services

Cases selected for the SAV-U caseload are ineligible if they are already designated for YVRP, wanted on a warrant for failure to appear, or sentenced to a long-term incarceration for a new offense. All other high-risk cases are eligible, including those who are in Philadelphia Prisons at the time of the transfer of the case to SAV-U.

By the end of 2007, it is possible that the SAV-U caseload will rise to 75 cases, each of which will remain assigned to SAV-U for up to five years. The potential number of eligible high-risk murder cases, however, will be over 1,000. Using less serious crimes, such as rape, robbery and aggravated assault, the number of higher-risk offenders would rise to 15,000 or more. If each of those cases were assigned to probation officers with SAV-U caseloads of 15, there would need to be 1,000 probation officers just for those cases. These calculations raise questions about staffing levels, training, and standards, starting with the key question that can be addressed by federal grants-in-aid to jurisdictions that would use such money effectively to drive down the local—and hence national—homicide rate:.



## Do Big Cities Have enough Probation and Parole Officers?

Judging by the Philadelphia staffing levels, there may be a critical shortage of community supervision staff capable of working with high-risk offenders. The question of how many offenders should be assigned to each probation officer is impossible to answer in the abstract. As an “issue paper” posted on the American Probation and Parole Association’s website indicates (at <http://www.appa-net.org/about%20appa/caseload.htm> ),

**“The search for the single "magic number" for the optimal caseload size is futile, and counterproductive. It runs contrary to the current knowledge and practice in the field, and sets forth an unrealistic expectation that such a standard can be set, be achieved, and produce desirable results.”**

While the national workload for Probation Officers in Sweden, for example, is only 15 cases per officer for all kinds of cases, it is not clear that a single caseload is used for all offense types. Hence the APPA issue paper illustrates the diversity of caseloads that might be possible by distinguishing workload and caseload. In the case of three different priority levels—whatever the basis for the priority—the workload could be equal across officers with different caseloads. This result is computed by applying a different number of hours to cases of different priority levels, as follows:

(Begin Quotation from <http://www.appa-net.org/about%20appa/caseload.htm> )

| Case Priority | Hours Per Month | Total Caseload |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| High          | 4 hours         | 30 cases       |
| Medium        | 2 hours         | 60             |
| Low           | 1 hour          | 120            |

“One caseload officer = 120 hours per month

If the maximum number of hours available to the caseload officer is 120 per month, the caseload can be made up of 30 high priority cases, 60 medium priority cases, or 120 low priority cases. In all three instances, the officer would have a full workload, i.e., one where the number of hours needed to fulfill the minimum requirements on all the cases (demand) is equal to the amount of hours available to the officer (supply).

As the table illustrates, there are three caseloads where the total **number** of cases is very different, but the total **workload** is equal. When there is a mixture of all three priority level cases in one caseload, there are almost endless possibilities (between 30 and 120 in the example) as to the total number of cases in a given caseload that would equate to a full workload.” (end quotation).

Even using such a formula, the caseloads across jurisdictions would vary widely. Philadelphia’s APPD caseload is far more likely to commit murder than the caseload of other probation and parole agencies across the state, judging from the statistics reviewed

above, the high percent of all homicides statewide in Philadelphia (380 out of 749 in 2005, or 51%), and the fact that Philadelphia's APPD has only 24% of the adult offender probation and parole caseload of the entire Commonwealth (214,400 as of 2005; see [http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us/pbpp/lib/pbppinfo/stats/CAPP\\_Report\\_2005.pdf](http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us/pbpp/lib/pbppinfo/stats/CAPP_Report_2005.pdf)) and 280 of the 1,340 county probation officers in the state. Put another way, Philadelphia has

- 50% of the murders in Pennsylvania
- 24% of the county-level adult probation & parole caseload
- 21% of the county probation officers

While Philadelphia may not have more *cases* per officer to supervise, it certainly has more potential for *crimes* per offender, and per probation officer caseload, than any other county in the state. It is the problem of risk, rather than caseload, that makes national standards problematic for Philadelphia. Whatever is true for murder is also true for other serious crimes, for which Philadelphia in 2005 had

- 1,024 of 3,400 rapes statewide—30%
- 10,069 of 19,000 robberies statewide—53%
- 10,139 of 28,000 aggravated assaults—36%

Based on the statewide percentage of murders, Philadelphia would need to have the same ratio of adult probation officers per murder as the rest of the state did in 2005. This formula equals

State PO total = 1340, minus 285 for Philadelphia = 1055  
State murder total = 749 – 380 in Philadelphia = 369  
Non-Philadelphia Probation Officers per murder 2005 =  $1055/369 = 2.86$   
2.86 POs per murder statewide outside of Philadelphia  
Philadelphia murders 2006 (406) X 2.86 POs per murder =  
**1,161 APPD officers**

A risk-based standard of workload, in contrast to a case-based standard, yields a substantially higher optimal complement of adult probation officers than Philadelphia has at present. This calculation is based solely on the risk-based standards for the rest of the state as of 2005. It is not suggested that this is the best or most appropriate standard. Rather, it simply illustrates the far higher risk level associated with the APPD caseload—and that of other FJD agencies—than is found, case per case, in other Pennsylvania counties.

## **Risk-Based Probation and Parole**

Whether a community corrections agency has 1,000 officers, 500 or even 400, their best use for *homicide prevention* would be guided by a risk-based classification of probationers. This classification would not be based on the seriousness of the offense for which they have been assigned to community supervision. It would not be based on the

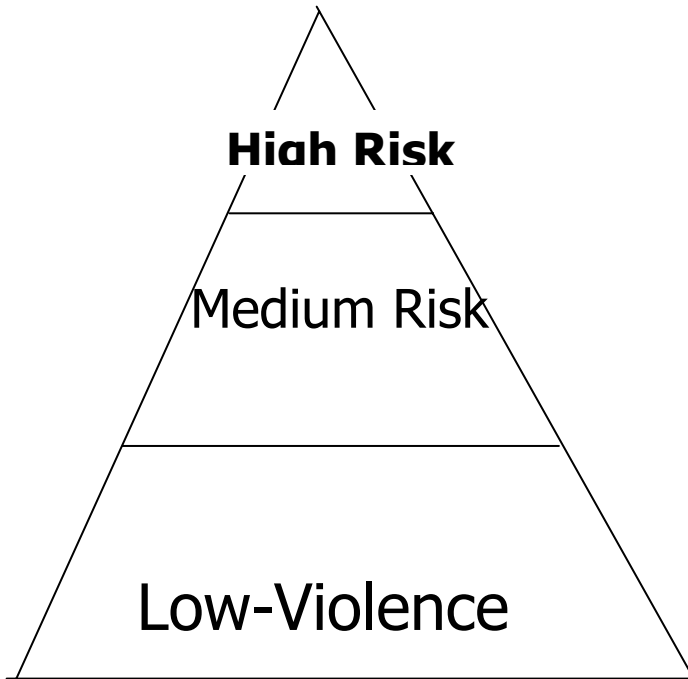
seriousness of their prior convictions. Nor would it be based on the simple likelihood of recidivism in any offense category. If a probation, parole or pre-trial supervision agency were staffed in accordance with its caseload's risk of homicide, it would be best advised to allocate caseloads according to risk of committing or attempting murder. A closely related option would be based on a probationer's risk of committing murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault or a sex offense against a child.

Whatever the exact definition of the serious offense profile to be used as the basis for risk analysis, Philadelphia's APPD now has the capacity to forecast who is most likely to be charged with those offenses, based on their past behavior. This forecast can divide all APPD cases into three groups, like an emergency room "triage" process:

- High-risk violent offenders
- Medium-risk violent offenders
- Low violence-risk offenders

The third group may consist of cases with a high risk of property offending, but with a low risk of committing the serious violent offenses that the other two groups are likely to commit. The Medium-risk violent offenders would be people who pose a substantial threat, but for whom current resources do not allow the same intensity of supervision and support as those provided by the SAV-Unit. The high-risk violent offenders would be limited to the most highly ranked group of offenders identified by the advanced risk analysis model, with the cutoff mandated by the number of officers available to provide the SAV-U protocol.

Under this model, the APPD would be re-structured as a pyramid of caseloads and serious violence risk levels. At the top of the pyramid would be the smallest caseload with the highest risk. Just below would be a larger caseload with somewhat lesser risk. At the bottom would be the largest caseload with the lowest risk. An illustration is presented below:



## Re-Structuring Current Operations

Re-engineering caseloads based on offender risk level could be done with or without adding more probation officers. Three main steps would be required: testing and implementing automated supervision for low violence-risk cases, expanding the application of the SAV-U protocol to high-risk cases, and reducing the caseloads for the probation officers supervising the offenders in medium-risk group.

Depending on where the statistical threshold is set for membership in each group, the 285 APPD officers could be assigned in something like the following structure

| <u>Risk Level</u> | <u>Caseload</u> | <u>(%)</u> | <u>Cases Per Officer</u> | <u>Total Officers</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| High              | 750             | (1.4)      | 15                       | 50                    |
| Medium            | 12, 250         | (23.6)     | 55                       | 222                   |
| Low               | 39,000          | (75)       | 500                      | 78                    |
| Total             | 52,000          | (100)      | 149                      | 285                   |

This is not a model that could be implemented overnight. Each of the three steps could be taken simultaneously, but in a deliberate and careful fashion.

**Automated Case Supervision** could be tested on a pilot basis with a sample of 2,000 cases randomly assigned to either of two groups:

- 1,000 to the current system of face-to-face supervision with a high-caseload probation officer with 175 cases
- automated supervision by computers monitored by an automated case officer with 500 cases

After a six month period, the two groups could be compared for their rates of serious violent crime, as well as their rates of absconding, failure of drug tests, re-arrest for any offense, and reconviction (direct violation). If there is no difference between the two groups, or if the automated supervision group does better than the standard treatment group, then the APPD could proceed to implement the automated case supervision model with the entire caseload meeting the statistical standard of low risk. That standard would be set by the Chief of APPD, in ongoing consultation with the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Reducing Caseloads with Medium Risk Offenders.** As the number of cases under automated supervision grows, the number of cases per probation officer can be reduced for supervising medium risk offenders. From a starting point in regional units of about 175 per officer at present, the caseload could move to the pyramid model of about 50 cases per officer. This figure, however, may still be far too high for effective prevention of serious crime, or for effective provision of support and surveillance. Lowering it still further would depend on increasing the complement of probation officers.

**Expanding the SAV-U Protocol.** This step can move forward independently of the automated case supervision process as the SAV-U protocol itself develops. Also required is the increasing availability of qualified, trained staff through recruitment and training. This step can be taken even without increasing the total APPD complement, but it would move much faster if that complement were to be increased.

## **Adding Officers for High-Risk Supervision**

Federal recognition of the very high rates of homicide among community corrections caseloads may contribute to a dialogue about the ideal investment in adult probation and parole. Evidence on the effectiveness of low caseloads for high-risk offenders is also needed. The Philadelphia APPD is currently assessing the impact of the SAV-U protocol on the rates of serious crime committed by APPD cases. A randomized, controlled comparison between standard supervision and the 15-case maximum SAV-U protocol will be completed by early-to-mid 2008. Further conclusions can be drawn at that time, even while the question of how best to support high-risk people is being developed by trial-and-error.

Offenders identified by the forecasting model are typically people who have suffered enormous problems in life. They have often been abused as very young children. They have seen brothers and sisters shot or beaten. They have been arrested for dealing drugs as accomplices of their parents. They may have chronic depression, post-traumatic stress

disorder, anxiety disorder or chronic substance abuse. They may also be psychotic or suffer from bipolar disorder.

Given the complexity and needs of each offender, there is almost no limit to how much a probation officer can do to help bring order and hope to a (usually) young person's life. The only limitations are time, money, and imagination. Of the three, imagination may be the most important. The frustrations of working with such difficult cases are great. Such work is not for everyone. It is a far cry from spending the day asking questions and recording the answers. The SAV-U protocol requires a very different set of tasks and skills from the standard model of probation. It also requires a mutually supportive work culture, in which small teams of probation officers can support each other, sharing challenges, ideas, and commitment.

For these and other reasons, it may be best to grow the use of the SAV-U protocol through new recruitment, as well as by careful selection and training of experienced officers. That is exactly how the first 5 SAV-U officers were chosen, with 3 experienced APPD officers and 2 (plus one analyst) recent Master's degree in criminology graduates. The team is well-blended with different strengths and skills. Following that model might be accomplished most easily with a national recruitment and local retention program (see section 13 below).

## **Police Partnerships**

One of the many questions about how best to supervise the most dangerous offenders is the role of the police in making sure offenders do not possess or carry guns. If greater investment in field contacts is shown to be an effective way to reduce murder, there will be a need for substantial increases in police officers dedicated to offender supervision. Two officers are needed for each probation officer during field visits. If a PO performs field visits 16 hours weekly, that would require 32 hours of police time. With preparation and intelligence work on each household to be visited, this would mean about one police officer for every probation officer working under the SAV-U protocol.

The number of police officers needed will therefore depend on the level of the city's investment in high-risk supervision. Assuming 50 high-risk probation officers with no increase in APPD staffing, there would need to be a minimum of 50 police officers assigned fulltime to SAV-U visits. If the City were to add 50 new APPD officers solely for the purpose of high-risk supervision, then the police complement required would be 100. If the City added 150 to high-risk supervision, the police complement needed would be 200.

Each of these police officers would be dedicated to a highly specific crime prevention mission. Consistent with the recent National Academy of Sciences review of the effectiveness of police strategies ([http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=10419&page=R1](http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10419&page=R1)), the use of police for such highly specific purposes is likely to be more effective than increasing the capacity to

respond to 911 calls. Thus any program of adding police officers to the PPD, as many have recently proposed, could be accomplished by increasing the capacity of APPD to prevent homicide.

## **A Federal Grant Program**

Since 9-11-2001, over 100,000 Americans have been murdered on the streets of our cities. The cost of preventing even a portion of these murders could be minimal in relation to what has been spent since that date on defense and homeland security. The federal government could invest in a high-yield program to gain knowledge about what works, at the same time that it could reduce homicide, by creating a program that would fund state and local probation, parole, pre-trial supervision, and juvenile probation and aftercare agencies to use their court-ordered conditions of community supervision in the following way:

1. Conduct a homicide-focused risk analysis of the factors best predicting homicide in the agency's caseload over at least 10,000 cases over at least two years.
2. Identify current cases with the high-risk factors identified by the risk analysis.
3. Assign a randomly selected sample of the high-risk cases to a low-caseload community supervision unit.
4. Focus the unit on working with offenders to prevent violence, by any appropriate, evidence-based and legal means indicated in a diagnosis of the offender's life history and mental health needs. This could include clinical treatments for such chronic disorders as PTSD, drug abuse, or depression.
5. Focus the unit on insuring that the offender does not carry or gain access to any guns.
6. Collect and record data among all high-risk offenders, both those randomly assigned to low caseload supervision and those in the "control" group, compiled in regular reports for federal publication of the comparative rates of homicide victimizations, arrests on charges of murder or attempted murder, and other crimes.

The grants would pay for university-agency partnerships, supporting the costs of both data analysis and community corrections staff. Minimum grants of \$500,000 per year would be needed to create the scale necessary for successful projects, which could be limited to agencies in jurisdictions with at least 50 murders per year. Such a program would be rational, risk-based, and evidence driven to learn whether or not it works, city by city, using randomized controlled experiments that would allow comparisons of effective and ineffective programs in terms of how they differed in their content. The result may or may not be a reduction in homicide in the short run. But in the long run the best way to combat murder is with scientific knowledge. That is something that the proposed program, if administered based on peer-reviewed decisions rather than earmarks, would be guaranteed to deliver.