

# CAPSA

## Census of Adult Probation Supervising Agencies

### Study to Provide New Information on Probation Supervision in the United States

A nationwide project that will provide a complete description of the organization and varying nature of adult probation in the United States is coming soon. The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, working with Westat and the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), is sponsoring the 2014 Census of Adult Probation Supervising Agencies (CAPSA). Data collection will be conducted in the summer of 2014 and will consist of a national census of public agencies that supervise adults on felony probation and private companies that directly supervise adult probationers.

Comprehensive data on the organization and administration of adult probation supervision are not currently available at the national and jurisdiction levels, and the data that do exist are not based on standardized definitions. The previous census of probation agencies was conducted by BJS in 1991, and the nature of probation has significantly changed since then. For example, Community Corrections Acts (CCA) have expanded beyond the original three states (Minnesota, Iowa, and Colorado) that established them in the 1970s; independent, state-level community corrections boards have been created in some states; more private companies have been providing probation supervision; new methods and practices of probation supervision have been utilized; and the use of community-based correctional facilities as an alternative to incarceration for probationers has increased.

#### Information gaps

CAPSA will address information gaps identified by the community corrections field and will provide a complete picture of how adult probation in the United States is currently organized, the supervision policies and practices agencies have established to administer adult probation, the various types of functions agencies perform, and the different types of individuals supervised by probation agencies. In addition, the study will produce a comprehensive list of public agencies that supervise adults on felony probation and private companies that directly supervise adult probationers. CAPSA also has the potential to enhance the utility of probation population data collected through BJS's Annual Probation Survey. It could provide a better understanding about factors related to population changes by examining the associations between the operations of probation agencies and their supervision policies and practices relative to population changes, such as the size of the probation population, the types of probationers supervised, movements on to and off supervision, and outcomes of supervision.

#### CAPSA respondents

The CAPSA project team has been using several sources to assemble a preliminary roster of public agencies and private companies nationwide that are believed to supervise adult probationers. To date, approximately 2,000 entities are included on the roster. All agencies and companies on the preliminary roster will be asked to participate in the study. Efforts to identify other available sources, agencies, and companies are ongoing. Additional agencies and companies will be asked to participate if they are identified during the collection period.

The head of each agency or company will be asked to designate a respondent who can complete a study questionnaire. The questionnaire for public agencies will be web-based, and the designated respondent will be



provided instructions on how to access the questionnaire online. The secure website will allow respondents to save and close the questionnaire at any time and re-open it later to continue or edit entries until they are ready to submit their answers. A different questionnaire will be used to collect information from private companies, which will be mailed to the designated private company respondent.

In 2013, 60 public agencies and private companies were asked to participate in a pilot test of the CAPSA survey. The findings were used to assess the level of burden placed on respondents and to evaluate and revise the survey questions to help enhance the utility and quality of the data to be collected in the national study. To minimize burden on agencies and companies, the questionnaires include only a few items that ask for aggregate counts (e.g., number of probationers under supervision and number of supervision officers). The estimated time to complete the public agency questionnaire is about 65 minutes; the private company questionnaire should take about 30 minutes.

## CAPSA objectives and content

The CAPSA survey is designed to meet several objectives: 1) to screen agencies and companies on the roster to determine whether they meet the CAPSA eligibility criteria, 2) to assess and validate the roster of agencies by relying on respondents to identify additional agencies within their jurisdiction that may be missing from the roster, and 3) to collect information from the CAPSA-eligible agencies that describes the organization and nature of adult probation at the national and jurisdiction levels.

Topics addressed in the 2014 national study include—

- policies and practices
  - methods of supervision (e.g., electronic supervision, intensive supervision, or programs and services for special populations)
  - party/venue responsible for supervision (e.g., agency, third party, private company, or community-based correctional facility) (public agencies)
  - risk and needs assessment
  - firearms policies and arrest powers of supervision officers (public agencies)
- supervision authority (public agencies)
  - to impose conditions
  - to grant early positive discharge
  - to impose a period of incarceration

- functions performed
- populations served; size of populations
- funding sources for adult probation supervision (public agencies)
- sector (i.e., public agency or private company)
- branch and level of government (public agencies); branch and level of government for which they supervise adult probationers (private companies)
- type of oversight by governmental agencies (private companies)
- number of states for which they supervise adult probationers (private companies).

CAPSA will have direct implications on policy and practice of adult probation supervision. It is critical to help understand correctional systems nationwide, and for policy development and criminal justice planning at all levels of government. Adult probation is an amorphous field that manages a large and diverse population. The CAPSA findings will provide essential information to move the field forward with a comprehensive picture of the structure of adult probation in the United States and the type and prevalence of policies and practices that are currently in place for supervision. For example, the CAPSA information could be used to answer the following questions:

- How many adult probation agencies exist in the United States?
- How is adult probation organized in the United States? How does the organization vary across jurisdictions?
- What are the various functions that adult probation agencies perform? How do they differ across jurisdictions?
- What sources of funding do agencies receive for adult probation? How do funding sources vary by structure, across jurisdictions, and by size of agencies?
- What are the various types of populations that adult probation agencies supervise? Is there a relationship between the size of agencies' adult probation populations and the types or varieties of individuals (e.g., juveniles, parolees, or pretrial) they supervise? What is the nature of that relationship? How large is their adult probation population compared to the size of the other populations they supervise?

- How large (e.g., population size, number of supervision officers, or number of states where private companies are operating) are adult probation agencies?
- Is there a relationship between agency size and the number and types of populations they supervise? What is the nature of that relationship?
- To what degree do agencies have the authority or operational responsibility to administer aspects of adult probation? How does this vary by agency type (e.g., function, level/branch of government)?
- What methods and practices of supervision do agencies have in place to manage the adult probation population? What are the most common types? How do they vary by structure, across jurisdictions, by population characteristics, and funding sources?
- How do public probation agencies conduct supervision (e.g., directly, third party, or both) and how does this vary by specific practices and structure?
- Do agencies have any supervision authority to administer adult probation without approval from a judge or court (e.g., to impose conditions, grant early positive discharge, or impose a period of incarceration)? If so, what type of supervision authority do they have? What is the extent of their authority? Does this vary by structure or jurisdiction? If so, how does this vary?
- Which states use private companies to supervise adult probationers?
- Which types of governmental agencies use private companies to supervise adult probationers? How does this vary by state?
- To what degree do governmental agencies conduct various types of oversight of private companies' adult probation supervision activities? Does this vary by state? If so, how does it vary?
- What are the various functions that private probation companies perform? How do they differ by state?
- What methods and practices of supervision do private companies have in place to manage the adult probation population? How do they differ by state and governmental agencies served?

CAPSA data can serve as a benchmark, and the standardized questionnaire and definitions will permit states and localities to rely on the data to compare their probation agencies to all probation agencies nationwide.

## Contacts

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