

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/report-to-seattle-municipal-court-probation-services>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Seattle Municipal Court Probation Services (Probation Services) asked Vera to review the departments policies and practices to identify examples of success and areas for improvement. Over the course of the engagement, Vera explored the degree to which Probation Services is in line with best practices in community supervision and positioned to move forward in the broader context of advancing system reform. Vera also examined the impact of the departments policies and practices on racial equity and gender equity, as well as client success and well-being. This report identifies findings from those research activities and makes recommendations based on the departments level of alignment with key principles for effective community supervision.

Although Probation Services has taken meaningful steps toward becoming an effective, evidence-based probation department, considerable work remains to be done. The department should re-envision itself and its work, with the goal of helping people on probation to be successful, which in many cases, may mean intervening less, not more.

Probation Services should prioritize resources for people at higher risk of future system involvement, thus significantly reducing its overall caseload and avoiding intervention with people at lower risk.

Probation Services should make greater use of incentives to encourage clients success. Fully ending probation supervision early is the most powerful motivator.

Probation Services should conduct deeper analysis to understand why racial disparities and gender disparities exist, including comparisons of conditions, violations, and revocations across race, ethnicity, and gender.

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