

Increasing Probation Success Through the Three Lane Approach

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Introduction

Ramsey County Community Corrections (RCCC) and the Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice formed a partnership beginning in Fall 2019 to participate in the Reducing Revocations Challenge to understand the drivers of probation revocations and identify ways to reduce them in Ramsey County. The first phase of the challenge consisted of research to answer two questions: “What is the pathway to revocation for people on probation in Ramsey County?” and “What are the drivers of revocations in Ramsey County?” The research consisted of a legal and policy review, interviews with 44 criminal justice system stakeholders, and data analysis. The [research report and executive summary](#) is available from the Robina Institute.

Research included tracking a cohort of people who started probation in Ramsey County in 2016. The cohort consisted of 3,005 people who were on probation for the following offense levels, as defined by Minnesota State Statute 609.02: “felonies (28%), gross misdemeanors (28%), and misdemeanors (43%).” (Mitchell, Hanrath, & Harbinson) Of the people in the cohort, 60% did not receive probation violations

and 40% received one or more probation violations. (Mitchell, Hanrath, & Harbinson) Once violated, the research showed 88% of probation violations fell into four main categories: new crimes (28%), failure to maintain contact with the probation officer (29%), programming or treatment noncompliance (13%), and substance use or positive and/or missed drug tests (18%). (Mitchell, Hanrath, & Harbinson)

Phase I findings indicated that Black and Native American people are overrepresented in the Ramsey County probation population and received more probation violations than any other racial groups at all offense levels. Updated data analysis in 2021 confirmed these disparities. For example, people exiting probation who were Native American had a 71% higher revocation rate compared to those exiting who were White. Black people exiting probation had a 54% higher revocation rate than White people. Phase I also indicated that many individuals on probation have significant unmet needs related to things such as housing, chemical dependency, mental health, and poverty. Additionally, for Black and Native

American individuals on probation there is also a lack of access to culturally appropriate and specific community resources to address these needs. Finally, Phase I showed that probation officers do not adequately reflect the communities they serve, and this may add to racial disparities as well.

After the research phase, the Robina Institute made recommendations to reduce probation violations and revocations in Ramsey County. These were focused on addressing the main drivers of probation revocations in Ramsey County including, racial differences in violations and revocations (with people who were Black and Native American being subject to more violations and revocations than people who were white), high rates of violations and revocations for failure to maintain contact, and high rates of revocation for misdemeanor (MM) and gross misdemeanor (GM) offenses. The specific recommendations were:

- **Delve more deeply into both criminal and technical violation reasons.** Closer examination of criminal and technical violations was needed to get a better understanding of the reasons for those violations and would result in developing different ways to respond to them.
- **Reconsider the use of jail.** Phase I research indicated that jail was the default response to probation violations. In the study, 58% of revocations resulted in local incarceration and even when probation continued, 57% received

some period of local confinement. As a result, jail use needed to be re-examined to determine when it was necessary and unnecessary as a response to probation violations.

- **Focus on addressing the basic needs of people on probation.** Interviews indicated that people on probation are struggling to meet their basic needs and that probation officers are in a unique position to be able to identify needs and make concrete referrals to social services.
- **Address racial disparities in outcomes.** The study found that race was a significant factor in outcomes when pertaining to probation violations and probation revocations. The data showed that people who are Black and Native American were more likely to receive a probation violation and the likelihood of a probation revocation was higher for felony level offenses.

Lanes

During the initial stages of the project, RCCC and Robina formed a multidisciplinary Advisory Committee comprised of many stakeholders within the Ramsey County criminal justice system including, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, community organizations, probation leadership, probation officers, and community members with lived probation experience. RCCC also hired a part time Project Manager to facilitate the work, provide direction and guidance to

the workgroups, and manage relationships with stakeholders on the Advisory Committee and workgroups. In addition to the project manager, a Racial and Health Equity Planning Specialist, a county role dedicated to advancing community engagement and racial equity, was actively involved in the planning, implementation, and decision making in the project. This role led community engagement efforts and ensured that the initiative kept racial equity at the forefront of the work.

Driven by the research, the Advisory Committee created “The Three Lane Approach” to address many of the issues identified in the research phase of the project. As this brief is published, the work is still in progress as the Three Lane Approach is a longer-term systemic shift and requires policy and practice change by many parts of the system. The lanes, outlined below, aimed at impacting the main drivers of revocations in Ramsey County as well as to address numerous findings from the Phase I study. The approach embedded the advancement of racial equity in every lane to address racial disparities. Lane 1 was intended to reduce probation revocations for people who are at a low risk to reoffend, Lane 2 was focused on people with a moderate risk to reoffend, and Lane 3 was created for people with a higher risk to reoffend.

Lane 1

Equitably reduce the correctional footprint for those who do not need to be on probation.

Phase I findings indicated that probation revocation rates were highest for people on probation for misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor offenses. Due to these findings, advisory group members questioned whether probation was necessary for everyone in this group. Additionally, during Phase I, Ramsey County had an early discharge policy for felony level cases in place but there were no procedures to ensure active review of cases to determine if such requirements had been met. The goal with this strategy was to reduce the Ramsey County probation footprint by developing alternative sentencing options to supervised probation and by moving individuals more quickly through the probation system by instituting a robust early discharge policy and process. Reducing the total number of people on probation will lighten caseloads for probation officers and enable them to focus efforts, energy, and resources on people who are at a higher need level and fall under Lanes 2 and 3.

Lane 2

Equitable amplify social, health, and welfare services and reduce technical violations for those currently over supervised and in need of a high level of social services/supports.

The findings in Phase I indicated that addressing basic needs is a critical component to helping clients be successful on probation and, as a result, Lane 2 was recommended. Phase I also found that jail as a sanction was overused for people who were at a low or medium risk level. Lane 2

primarily targets people who are at a low and medium risk level and encompasses most misdemeanor/gross misdemeanor offenses as well as felonies for people who have a lower risk profile and includes developing a protocol for tailoring probation conditions to the individual. People in this strategy may be currently over-supervised, so part of the work was to pare back correctional resources most necessary and increase social services and supports to ensure the person's basic needs are addressed through increasing collaboration between corrections and social services in the county. Changes in the way probation officers respond to behaviors are required to adjust supervision levels and sanctions for this group. Incarceration will be sparingly used; instead, the preferred response will be grounded in social services and community-based interventions.

Lane 3

Equitably promote behavioral change and prevent reoffending by providing correctional interventions for those recommended for prison but receive probation or are at a high risk of reoffending.

Lane 3 primarily targets people at a high risk to reoffend who also have high needs, or whose sentence was originally recommended to be prison per Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines but were instead placed on probation. People in Lane 3 require more correctional resources (i.e., more frequent check-ins, cognitive behavioral interventions, more extensive assessment, and case planning) than

people in Lane 2. Since people in Lane 3 tend have the highest needs, it is focused on targeting resources to those individuals. Black and Native American populations are likely to be overrepresented in this lane due to disparities in other areas of the criminal legal system coupled with disparities in other areas such as housing, education, health, and income/poverty. (Administration, Minnesota State Demographic Center Department of, 2023) Through the intentional and persistent application of rapport and relationship building skills, core correctional practices, cognitive behavioral programming, motivational enhancement techniques, and referrals to culturally specific-community based services, Ramsey County seeks to promote stability and increase success on probation for these populations. A significant initiative in this lane is the development of the community navigator roles, a resource open to all but targeted to Black and Native American individuals within this lane, to provide peer-to-peer support and serve as credible messengers for those individuals who are struggling on probation.

Other Initiatives to Address Probation Revocations

In addition to the three lanes, Ramsey County worked to understand the reasons behind failure to maintain contact. The Phase I study indicated that failure to maintain contact was a significant driver of technical probation violations and

revocations. One shortfall in Phase I was that the report did not have information from clients due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time, so it was incorporated into the implementation phase of the project. The research included interviewing people who failed to maintain contact with probation and was aimed at understanding such violations from the client's perspective. The research further aimed to develop interventions that might reduce these types of violations in the future. As this brief is published, findings for the failure to maintain contact study were not available but will be published publicly at a later date.

Another initiative in Ramsey County's Reducing Revocations Challenge was to hire and retain staff that reflect the clients served. One key point raised in Phase I interviews was that probation officers may have a difficult time connecting with people on probation due to racial and cultural differences. The racial identities of probation officers do not match those of the communities they serve. Ramsey County is working to address the issue by examining current hiring and retention practices, creating strategies to hire more diverse officers, and increasing retention when new officers are hired. Increasing diversity in officers may help to address some of the racial disparities in revocations.

Implementation of the Three Lane Approach

The implementation of the Three Lane Approach has been a complicated process for Ramsey County since the proposed

recommendations and goals of the lanes affect many aspects of the Ramsey County criminal justice system. The planning and recommendations in each lane were led by multidisciplinary workgroups, comprised of Advisory Committee members and non-Advisory Committee members, led by co-chairs that were community members and system members. Since the Three Lane Approach affected many parts of the Ramsey County criminal justice system, it was determined that multidisciplinary workgroups were the most effective means to make decisions on policy recommendations. Community input was critical to the success of the lanes. It was essential to include the voice of community members with lived probation experience since any policy changes would directly impact them. Community engagement will be a focus later in the brief. To ensure all members had similar information to start the work, each workgroup conversation started with a presentation and examination of the data pertaining to the individual workgroup. The progress to date is described in the sections below.

Lane 1

Equitably reduce the correctional footprint for those who do not need to be on probation.

The Lane 1 workgroup, formed in June of 2022, focused on equitably reducing the correctional footprint for those who do not need to be on probation. This workgroup was comprised of a variety of stakeholders including probation officers, probation evaluation staff, a judge, prosecutors, a

public defender, community members with lived experience, and representatives from community-based organizations. The goal of the group was to reach consensus on how to decrease the number of people on probation at sentencing. As mentioned above, Lane 1 is geared towards people with low level offenses and a low risk to reoffend. The workgroup met monthly for an hour, a total of eight times. The initial conversations were focused on determining which types of cases could fit under the workgroup, alternatives to probation, and the “eligibility criteria” for someone to not be placed on supervised probation. The group then categorized offenses as “on the table”-cases that would be considered and “off the table”-cases that would not be considered under the umbrella of the workgroup based on the research from Phase I and the goals of the workgroup.

One challenge the workgroup encountered was the phenomenon of “restitution-only probation” and discussed the purpose of putting these cases on supervised probation. These were individuals whose only condition aside from the standard conditions was to make progress paying restitution. Some members noted that probation officers are not able to significantly influence a probation client to pay restitution outside of reminders when checking in. Others noted that such oversight is needed because the process for docketing a civil judgment is difficult and places the onus on the victim to try to collect restitution. The workgroup determined that there were too many issues with the restitution process to address within the context of the workgroup, so they removed restitution-

only probation from the list of cases considered under Lane 1 recommendations. Restitution is an area for additional exploration that may result in an additional workgroup later.

After deliberations, the workgroup agreed on three core recommendations and identified two opportunities for additional exploration. The recommendations and opportunities for additional exploration are as follows:

Lane 1 Recommendations:

1. Prioritize diversion.

Diversion programming is currently being offered through various prosecutor offices within Ramsey County (the Saint Paul City Attorney’s Office, Ramsey County Attorney’s Office, and suburban prosecutors) and could be expanded upon.

- Review program eligibility criteria to ensure adults are not being excluded/disqualified due to needs (e.g., substance use, mental health, employment, housing). Connect diversion participants with services and resources to address these needs.
- Study pilot Domestic Violence Early Resolution Program (DVERP) for effectiveness. DVERP is a program that offers an alternative to traditional prosecution for first time, misdemeanor level, low risk domestic violence defendants. Based on findings, determine parameters for implementation in

collaboration with program partners.

- Assess feasibility for piloting additional programs for other case types currently ineligible for diversion.

2. Eliminate supervised probation for cases with no special conditions ordered.

The purpose of supervised probation is to reduce a client's risk to reoffend by offering services and interventions that address identified needs, increase self-sufficiency, and promote behavioral change.

Cases with no special conditions do not have any programming/services for the probationer to complete or for the probation officer to support and monitor.

- Align this recommendation with the recommendations of the *Lane Two: Condition Setting* workgroup (reducing and individualizing conditions).
- Caution not recommending/ordering special conditions to 'justify' supervised probation.
- Utilize alternatives to supervised probation for cases where special conditions are completed prior to sentencing.

3. Eliminate supervised probation for non-DWI traffic offenses (Misdemeanor/Gross Misdemeanor level).

This includes offenses like careless driving, reckless driving, driving after cancellation, and traffic collisions that do not have underlying DWI charges/conduct.

- A limited number of cases currently come to supervised probation, and if they do, they are automatically assigned per policy to the Ramsey County Probation Service Center (PSC) for the least restrictive form of supervision.
- Most of these types of cases receive an alternative disposition to supervised probation (e.g., probation to the court, fine only).

At the June 2023 Advisory Committee Meeting, these recommendations were presented to and endorsed by the Advisory Committee. At this stage, affected stakeholders such as probation, the St. Paul City Attorney's Office, judges, and court administration are in conversation on how to implement the endorsed recommendations.

Lane 2

Equitably amplify social, health, and welfare services and reduce technical violations for those currently over supervised and in need of a high level of social services/supports.

To date, there have been two Lane 2 workgroups working on two issues: condition setting and building a collaborative partnership between corrections and social services. These two issues were identified in the Phase I. As

outlined before, people in Lane 2 tend to be over conditioned and have a high need of support for meeting their basic needs.

The first workgroup focuses on decreasing conditions for individuals on probation and tailoring conditions to each person. The workgroup started in June 2022 and is comprised of a variety of stakeholders including probation officers, presentencing investigation staff, Ramsey County Correctional Facility Administration, probation evaluation, a suburban prosecutor, a Ramsey County Attorney's Office prosecutor, a judge, public defender, and community members with lived probation experience. The Lane 2 Condition setting workgroup met for 1.5 hours every three weeks for a total of 14 meetings to date. With such a large and varied group, the members realized from the start that sharing their diverse perspectives on probation conditions and how each system role interacts with them. At the first meeting, members representing prosecution, defense, the courts, and probation gave 10-minute presentations on their role/experience in condition setting. This exercise allowed all the members to have a more holistic view of the various purposes of probation conditions and how they are established.

Next, the group examined the standard conditions (conditions set for all probationers) and special conditions (conditions ordered by the Judge on a case-by-case basis) that were set in 5% or more cases. Based on the work done by peer site, Monroe County, Indiana in partnership with Justice System Partners, Ramsey County replicated the exercise called "Is it Truthful, Purposeful, and

Efficient," and applied the following questions to each condition:

- Is the condition Truthful? - If someone violates a condition, will a consequence follow?
- Is the condition Purposeful? - What's the purpose of the condition?
- Is the condition Efficient? - Does the condition serve its intended purpose? Does it clearly articulate that purpose?

The "Truthful, Purposeful, and Efficient" exercise took a significant amount of time for the workgroup and provided very thoughtful conversation and information for each condition. In total, the workgroup examined 15 special conditions, 5 misdemeanor/gross misdemeanor standard conditions, and 10 felony standard conditions over the course of 6 meetings for a total of 9 hours. Upon completing this exercise, the workgroup used the information discussed to begin revising the conditions. Revisions ranged from changing the wording to completely removing the condition from the list. As this brief is published, the Lane 2 Condition setting workgroup is in its final revision stages and will present the recommended changes to the Advisory Committee for endorsement. Overall, the Lane 2 Condition Setting workgroup has been productive with few challenges. The workgroup is projected to provide recommendations at the October 2023 Advisory Committee meeting, so the recommendations were not yet final at the publishing of this brief.

The second workgroup in Lane 2, at the time this brief was published, is in the process of starting their work. The workgroup's goal is to increase collaboration between corrections, other agencies, and social service providers. The workgroup will discuss concrete referrals, a quick process for clients, internal and external referrals, and certainty that clients will get the supports they need. So far, the workgroup has met three times for introductions to the workgroup's task, examining data related to the goal, and identifying gaps in the current referral process. The workgroup is comprised of a probation officer, probation leadership, community members with lived experience, staff from Ramsey County Housing Stability, and staff from Ramsey County Adult Mental Health. Since the workgroup is in its startup phase, there are not any findings to report currently.

Lane 3

Equitably promote behavioral change and prevent reoffending by providing correctional interventions for those who are recommended for prison but receive probation or are at a high risk of reoffending.

Based on the Robina Institutes research findings, Lane 3 is comprised of two different workgroups, the first focused on the use of confinement and the second workgroup focused on developing a navigator role. The first workgroup, formed in June 2022, - aimed to on develop new guidelines for the use of confinement as a sanction with an emphasis on minimizing the use and duration. Its

members consist of probation staff, a prosecutor, a public defender, community members with lived experience, and a judge. The workgroup met an hour every other week for a total of 21 hours. The group started by defining the goals of the workgroup and to further flesh out the population that would be affected by the work. They determined they would need to discuss and agree on the purpose of confinement, determine when confinement is necessary, and when it is not necessary. These discussions included understanding how confinement is currently used and what justification is needed when using confinement as a sanction.

Of all the workgroups, the use of confinement group had the most difficulty coming to consensus on how to move forward. The work started at a time there was a perceived violent crime spike in the Twin Cities area that was amplified by the media. Overall, data showed that crime levels were down in the Twin Cities, but media coverage furthered a perception that violent crime was high and on the rise. This created a challenge when rethinking the use of confinement. Some members of the workgroup were uneasy about the prospect of recommending reduced confinement for the higher risk individuals targeted in Lane 3 because they presented a greater threat to public safety.

The disagreement in the group reflected a weakness in the implementation of the Three Lane Approach. Though each of the three lanes is geared towards different risk levels (e.g., Lane 3 was geared towards people who were at a high risk to reoffend), some of the recommendations

from the research phase were aimed at improvement across all three lanes. For example, the research phase recommended reexamining the use of confinement because it had become the default sanction for all violations. Thus, the use of confinement recommendations would need to take all risk levels into account, not just the higher risk individuals in Lane 3. Once the sticking point was recognized, it was decided the Use of Confinement workgroup would reboot the conversation. A few new members were added to the workgroup, and the workgroup clarified the original intent of the Phase I recommendations reiterating that reconsiderations for confinement should affect all lanes and specifically as it relates to technical violations.

After rebooting, the workgroup generated a list of alternatives to confinement to help guide the conversation and provide a list of options when discussing offenses. Once the list was created and agreed upon, the group started going through technical violations of the conditions of probation and decided as a group whether confinement was an appropriate response to the violation. The workgroup focused on different offense types, and discussed whether that difference affected the appropriateness of using confinement as a response or not. That exercise is currently in progress and results are not yet available.

The second workgroup in Lane 3 was tasked with creating a navigator program, where individuals with lived experience act as guides for those currently on probation.

The navigator workgroup comprised of probation officers, a representative from the Ramsey County Manager's office, a Ramsey County contracting specialist, community members with lived experience, and community organizations. The workgroup formed in June 2022 and met a total of seven times as a workgroup.

The group initially began with conversations about what a navigator should do, whether the position should be placed with the county or a community-based organization, and discussion on what responsibilities a navigator could have. After five meetings, one workgroup member raised the point that the community members had not been in attendance of all the workgroup meetings.

They noted that the position was intended to help people on probation and those voices were essential to the development of the navigator role and suggested using a community consensus workshop to glean the information needed. The workgroup agreed to the proposal and decided to pause the meetings until additional community members were recruited.

It took three months of heavy community member recruitment and 12 community members participated in a consensus workshop series that consisted of five two-hour workshops. T

he consensus workshop participants included community members with lived experience, probation officers, probation leadership, and members from community-based organizations. The first consensus workshop was hosted in January 2023.

Consensus workshop structure and process

The consensus workshop answered a specific question, “What are the duties and responsibilities of the Navigator?”, through several facilitated steps.

Step 1-Brainstorm

The first step of the process was for individuals participating to brainstorm answers to the workshop question on a half sheet of paper with a goal of each person writing down 8-10 ideas. They then took time to star their 3-4 best ideas. After starring the ideas, they formed small groups of 3-4 to share their starred ideas. The small groups then wrote the 4-5 collective group ideas on half sheets with one idea per sheet written in big lettering. The group facilitator then compiled the ideas and separated them out by group.

Step 2-Cluster

The second step in the consensus workshop was to cluster the ideas that were similar. Once the items were reviewed and separated out, the lists were examined, and themes were recognized and written down for each category. The themes were as follows:

- Ability to provide connections to community resources and help navigate people through the process.
- Establish and build relationships with/between people on probation and Probation Officers which promotes personal success while on community supervision.
- Have established knowledge of the probation department through

lived experience or related experience.

- Provide a person-centered, trauma informed approach that is inclusive of a person’s identity and needs.
- Able to adapt to a variety of situations by utilizing effective communication, organizational skills, multi-tasking, and problem solving.
- Commitment to building relationships between individuals, groups, and communities.

Step 3-Naming

After the themes above were developed, the group found consensus on what to name each category. They are as follows:

- Person Specific Services
- Personal Qualities/Attributes
- Commitment to Community
- Community Connections
- Identity Awareness
- Partnership
- Relationship Establishment

The category names above were used as job function headings when the full job description was developed.

Step 4-Resolve

The final step was to review what was generated during the consensus workshop and agree to move forward with the recommendations.

After the consensus workshop was complete, the workgroup co-chairs, project manager, and Racial and Health Equity Planning Specialist created the job description for the navigator. The conversations with community members

resulted in the name of navigator being changed to Community Justice Specialist. All community members who participated in the consensus workshop were invited to become members of the workgroup. They all opted to join the workgroup to finish developing the Community Justice Specialist role. (See Appendix A) The workgroup members also determined that the role should be hosted by a community-based organization to build trust with the people utilizing the service. Ramsey County is currently in the process of securing funding for the Community Justice Specialist role and the role will likely launch in 2024.

Three Lane Approach Impact

The RRC in Ramsey County is still in progress with many of the workgroups still working on formulating recommendations. When Phase II planning began, it was understood that the plan and initiatives would be a multi-year endeavor since there were so many system actors and policy changes outside of RCCC's control. Though policy and practice changes have not yet been formally adopted, the different partners in the project did organically begin changing their practices as they engaged in this project and the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced those changes. Additionally, RCCC was already engaged in policy and practice reviews and changes when RRC started. For example, there was an increased utilization of dispositional departures in Ramsey County where people who should have been sent to prison, per Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines, were placed on probation

instead. Many cases also received shortened probation lengths from 5 years to 3 years. Both phenomena resulted in gains even without the formal implementation of RRC recommendations.

With that in consideration, there are some data points that highlight a shift in probation towards reducing probation revocations and increasing probationer success. RCCC has seen a reduction in probation violations when comparing 2019, 2021, and 2022 data. Fifteen percent (15%) of adults on probation had a probation violation filed in 2021 and that rate remained at 15% in 2022, compared to 2019 where the rate was 19%.

One of the goals of the Reducing Revocations Challenge in Ramsey County was to expand the early discharge policy for non-felony level cases. RCCC expanded that policy to include the GM level cases/offenses. Since that expansion, there has been an increase in cases receiving an early discharge, defined as discharge two months or more prior to the case expiration date. In 2022, 34% of GM cases exited probation as the result of an early discharge compared to 7% of cases in 2019.

There have been changes in the utilization rates of confinement compared to pre-pandemic rates. For example, in 2019 there were 1,044 admissions to the local Ramsey County Correctional Facility (RCCF) due to a probation violation, compared to 358 violation admissions in 2021 and 510 violation admissions in 2022. While admissions to RCCF did increase in 2022 compared to 2021, the facility's average daily population (ADP) remains at/near historical lows with 63

men and 7 women in custody. By contrast, in 2019, the ADP at RCCF was 185 men and 32 women.

There has also been an increase in utilization of electronic home monitoring (EHM) as a community alternative to incarceration at RCCF for people on probation. In 2020, EHM program eligibility criteria were expanded due to COVID-19 to include more offense types, including some person related offenses. In 2022, just over 50% of admissions were released to EHM, compared with less than 20% of admissions in 2019. Despite this expansion of criteria, EHM completion rates have remained at or above 95%, suggesting that reduced utilization of incarceration can be achieved without compromising public safety. Finally, while felony probation revocations to state prison (MN Dept of Corrections) also increased in 2022 compared to the historic lows observed/attained in 2021, the number of probation revocations to state prison in 2022 (n=86) decreased by 43% compared the number in 2019 (n=150).

RCCC has also made progress in increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of its workforce. In 2022, 37% of RCCC staff identified as racially and ethnically diverse and/or American Indian compared to 31% in 2019. Fifty eight percent (58%) of new hires in 2022 were racially and ethnically diverse and/or American Indian compared to 38% in 2019.

Beyond these data points, there have been some additional impacts from the three-lane approach in promoting probation department engagement with clients with lived probation experience, community, and system partners.

First, RCCC was able to hear and learn directly from people who struggled with maintaining contact with probation about their underlying challenges and barriers and how these have impeded engagement in probation services. While these findings have yet to result in specific policy, procedural, or practice changes, the commitment to engage individuals who have struggled on probation and learn from their experiences on probation is an impact from this approach.

Second, this approach expanded opportunities for more in-depth criminal justice system partner conversations and collaboration to occur, and allowed for relationships and trust between people who work in the system to be developed and deepened. For example, probation officers and supervisors discussed with judges and prosecuting attorneys' how and why they address and respond to compliance issues with various probation conditions is the type and level of conversation that rarely happens at other cross-system meetings.

Third, the approach created a space for people who work in the criminal justice system and community members – including those with lived probation experience – to have direct dialogue and learn from each other. For example, community members with lived probation experience were able to share how they perceived the intent and navigated probation conditions such as random testing (UAs) and mental health evaluation (and follow recommendations) and in turn were able to hear from different system actors their perceptions of the purpose

and rationale for recommending and ordering specific conditions of probation.

Central Role of Community Engagement in the Three Lane Approach

Ramsey County prioritized engaging community members in the Three Lane Approach to create recommendations and policies that benefit people on probation. Connection with community was especially important to RCCC as it headed into the implementation phase of this work. The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners had already adopted a strategic plan that included a goal to advance racial and health equity and shared community power in decision making.¹ Therefore, in order for RCCC to move forward with the development of new policies and practices that would promote the success of people on probation, it was critically important to include community members in the process, not only by ensuring representation on each of the workgroups, but by sharing the decision-making power with them. The sections below will lay out the current ways community members who are/were justice involved were engaged in decision making processes meaningfully and purposefully.

To engage community meaningfully and purposefully in transformation work, it is

important to create a more dynamic model of community interaction that provides two-way communication and mutual benefit for the agency and community members. The following are the strategies Ramsey County used for developing this dynamic model.

1. **Ensured there was dedicated staff and resources are in place to lead community engagement efforts.** Purposeful and meaningful community engagement needs to be prioritized by corrections departments. Staff and resources specific to community engagement ensures consistent support, recruitment efforts, and prioritizes community members when making transformational change. RCCC hired two racial equity coordinators with the specific purpose to focus on building connections with community members.
2. **Invested time to define “community” and focused recruitment efforts to reach those most impacted by the Three Lane Approach.** The definition of community can change from issue to issue because different issues affect different people. Many initiatives within systems are implemented without including those most affected by proposed changes or solutions. To

¹ Ramsey County, 2020 Strategic Plan,

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¹ Ramsey County, 2020 Strategic Plan, <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Departments/Policy%20and%20Planning/2020%20Strategic%20Plan%20FINAL%208.12.2020%20%28002%29.pdf>

have a solution that truly works for the intended population, those voices must be part of the process from the beginning. For example, the Lane 2 workgroup was tasked with reviewing and reducing the number of probation conditions. Community members with lived experience on probation were essential for inclusion in this workgroup because they provided a unique perspective about what is like to be subject to and to try to follow probation conditions.

3. **Utilized a race equity lens when engaging community.** Utilize a race equity lens to interrupt the impact of unintended consequences by taking into consideration the lived experiences and perspectives of the racially diverse community members. Targeted outreach efforts should acknowledge the harm that the criminal justice system has done to specific communities. For example, in Ramsey County Black and Native American communities have historically been overrepresented in probation populations, and have experienced worse outcomes, such as probation violations and revocations at greater rates than people in white communities. Thus, it was imperative to include people from these communities in RCCC's work. This work necessitates an anti-racist approach, and racial equity work is rooted within a larger culture,

identity, and healing; it cannot be a one-off change.

4. **Compensated community members with lived experience for their time and knowledge.** Community members involved or formerly involved in the criminal justice system bring a broad range of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge to the table. These individuals are providing consulting-like services to the policy development and decision-making process and should be compensated fairly for their time and effort. It is also important to recognize that the process of sharing their experiences and knowledge may be resurfacing trauma for them. RCCC compensated community members at a rate of \$25 per hour, and this likely contributed to increased participation of community members in each of the workgroups.
5. **Provided a terminology guide for participating community members.** Often, meetings with government and system actors can be inaccessible due to the use of jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations. This puts community members at a disadvantage in the group if they do not know the meaning of the language of the profession and community members may be uncomfortable stopping the meeting to ask what a term means.

RCCC provided an extensive terminology guide (Appendix B) to equip community members with the knowledge and resources to be able to understand the meeting and contribute to the conversation without feeling left out.

6. **Articulated expectations about the level of influence community members would have in the process and how their input would be used.** With a government entity, there are usually multiple layers a new policy will need to go through to get approved. It is important for system actors to be clear and transparent about whether community members have the power to recommend or decide, or whether such power will be equally shared between the agency and community members. Communication of expectations is critical when engaging the community. RCCC started every workgroup with a level-setting meeting where the decision-making power of the workgroup was openly discussed. The net effect of this has been that the workgroups have moved forward with clearer expectations, and the workgroups have been able to maintain fuller participation.
7. **Hosted ongoing conversations with participating community members.** To ensure full participation of impacted community, RCCC was intentional

about having regular check-ins with community members. During check-ins, RCCC ensured that community members drove the conversations and encouraged openness about the process with what worked well and what did not work well. The goal was to help clear any roadblocks that created barriers for their full participation. The check-in was a space for the group to have an opportunity to show up as their authentic selves. RCCC conducted group check-ins with community members monthly. During these check-ins, members discussed what was happening in the workgroups and asked questions. Community members felt they could not represent the full voice of people impacted by the justice system, so they used the regular check ins to consult other community members about issues surfacing in the workgroups to get a more comprehensive view. After hearing a great deal about the use of risk assessment in corrections, for example, community members asked for and received training and education on risk assessment so they could participate more fully in the workgroup conversations.

8. **Used a co-design model and encouraged community members to take on leadership roles within the initiative.** RCCC utilized the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) approach for

collaborating and partnering with community members with lived experience. Each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution and implementation plan, was decided with community. RCCC looked to impacted community for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporated their advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. Care was taken to ensure community members with lived experience were at the table and their voices had equal weight to the system members. For example, the Lane 3 workgroup, which was working on rethinking the use of confinement in response to probation violations, was co-chaired by a probation planner and a formerly justice-involved individual. This ensured that understanding the experience of being incarcerated, and how that can affect a person's success or failure, was part of the conversation when developing recommendations.

9. **Established a two-way exchange of information.** For meaningful engagement to work, RCCC provided information and development opportunities for community members to be able to increase their knowledge base around the topic and had opportunities to improve their

skills. At the monthly check ins, community members kept talking about the risk assessment and how it is utilized. After hearing the feedback, Ramsey County training staff hosted a "Risk Assessment 101" information session. It consisted of 15 minutes of basic information about the risk assessment and one hour of dialogue between community members and the trainers. It provided an opportunity for community members to engage with Ramsey County staff and learn new information.

Future Direction

RCCC continues to implement its Three Lane Approach developed through the Reducing Revocations Challenge initiative. RCCC and the Reducing Revocations Challenge Advisory Committee are fully committed to realizing the effort and knowledge and implementing the recommendations from the various workgroups. While the grant supporting this work comes to an end by October 2023, the work will continue with an emphasis on implementing recommendations, evaluating impacts, addressing issues as needed, and sustaining policy and practice changes. The Advisory Committee will remain an active body throughout the implementation process to review progress and recommendations of the workgroups, and to provide guidance and oversight around implementation.

During the funding period, RCCC utilized grant dollars to hire a project manager to support and coordinate this work. RCCC intends to invest in the project management role and resource beyond the grant period to sustain the initiative. The work will continue to entail recruiting and engaging community members, supporting workgroup co-chairs, communicating progress with system and community partners, and supporting implementation of the recommendations. Pending approval of its 2024-2025 departmental budget, RCCC intends to invest \$400,000 over the next two years to fund two Community Navigator positions that will be housed within community-based organizations.

However, two challenges warrant mention. First, there has been turnover within RRC project team, system leadership, and other stakeholders. This requires ongoing investment to engage

new people around the project to sustain its progress and prioritization across the Ramsey County criminal justice system. Second, implementing recommendations will require policy, procedural, practice changes, and perhaps even evolutions in philosophy and values within the Ramsey County criminal justice system. The Three Lane Approach strategies are broad, systemic, and interconnected and that implementation will need to involve multiple stakeholders as well as more individuals beyond those have been directly involved in workgroups to be successful and sustainable.

Despite these challenges, RCCC is committed and invested in The Three Lane Approach as a framework for transforming probation in Ramsey County and reducing racial disparities in probation violations, revocations, and successful completion of probation.

References

Mitchell, K., Hanrath L., & Harbinson, E. (2021). *Understanding Probation Violations and Disrupting the Revocation Pathway in Ramsey County, Minnesota Executive Summary*. University of Minnesota Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice

Appendix A

Position Title: Community Justice Specialist

Position Description:

The Community Justice Specialist is a community-based role that will support people 18-24 years old on probation by:

- Establishing and building relationships with/between people on probation and Probation Officers which promotes personal success while on Community Supervision.
- Providing a person-centered, trauma informed approach that is inclusive of a person's identity and needs.
- Adapting to a variety of situations by utilizing effective communication, organizational skills, multi-tasking, and problem solving.
- Providing connections to community resources and help navigate people through the probation process.
- Having established knowledge of the probation department through lived experience or related experience.
- Committing to building relationships between individuals, groups, and communities.

Job Tasks:

Relationship Establishment

- Establish trust and support with people on probation.
- Build relationships and mentorship with people on probation to promote success. (Engage people on probation with intentional and thoughtful self-disclosure of personal experiences of overcoming challenges to build rapport and trust, and to inspire hope, empowerment, and positive action).
- Have an understanding for people on probation and their experiences.
- Help people on probation transition from survival mode to a mode of thriving.
- Establish clear boundaries with the individuals on probation.

Person Centered Services

- Establish contact with individuals on probation.
- Prioritize where to start with a person on probation based on their needs and goals.
- Match community resources to a person on probation based on their needs and ensure services are culturally appropriate.
- Maintain confidentiality with individuals on probation.

Community Connection

- Understand community needs and trends.
- Act as a liaison for community resources and retain knowledge about resources.
- Seek community resources to expand current service partnerships.
- Gain knowledge and information about economic barriers, healthcare system concerns, basic needs, food, transportation, and material goods.

Partnership

- Act as a liaison between people on probation and Probation Officers.
- Clarify Probation Officer's roles and responsibilities to people on probation.
- Assist the Probation Officer in locating and re-engaging out of contact probationers by facilitating connection and providing updated contact information.
- Collaborate with Probation Officer on resources the individual may need and update the officer on progress/barriers.

Qualifications, Skills, and Experience:

- High School Diploma or equivalent
- Prior knowledge of probation through lived experience or related experience.
- Ability to provide mentorship to individuals experiencing probation.
- Excellent verbal, written, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Ability to be flexible to the daily changing needs within the community and to handle obstacles with compassion and resolve.
- Motivated to do or achieve something because of one's own enthusiasm or interest; self-motivated.
- Knowledge of the local community, community-based agencies, available resources, issues, and trends relevant to people on probation.
- Experience with or willingness to learn about trauma informed care and best practices.
- Prior knowledge or willingness to learn about substance use disorder, mental health conditions/diagnoses, housing stability, and trauma informed care.
- Prior community engagement experience.
- Working knowledge of criminal justice system.
- Ability and willingness to interact with people on probation of different races, ethnicities, ages, disabilities, and sexual orientations in a multicultural environment.

Appendix B

Ramsey County Community Corrections Terminology and Acronym Guide

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
A		
Adult Detention Center	ADC	A 500-bed pre-trial facility providing safe and secure detention services to individuals following their arrest until a court disposition is reached. The ADC also houses individuals being held for probation or parole violations.
Adult Intervention Model	AIM	A model in development at RCCC meant to respond to behaviors of people on probation that includes responding to client accomplishments through incentives.
Adult Substance Abuse Court	ASAC	Provides participants with the support to lead substance and crime free lives Integrates community treatment and other services within the court system, collects restitution, and reduces recidivism.
Agent		See "Probation Officer"
Arnold Ventures		A philanthropic organization that funds the Reducing Revocations Challenge.
B		
Bench Warrant		Bench warrants are issued for individuals who fail to appear in court for a hearing, violate their pre-trial release supervision conditions (Project Remand), or do not follow a directive of the court.
Bureau of Criminal Apprehension	BCA	Provides investigative and specialized law enforcement services to prevent and solve crimes in partnership with law enforcement, public safety, and criminal justice agencies. Services include criminal justice training and development, forensic laboratory analysis, criminal histories, and investigations.
C		
Chemical Dependency/Comprehensive Assessment	CD/Rule 25	Court ordered chemical dependency assessment.
City University of New York-Institute for State and Local Governance	CUNY-ISLG	ISLG serves as the intermediary for the Reducing Revocations Challenge initiative, managing it on Arnold Ventures' behalf.
Community Alternative Program	CAP	Used for eligible Electronic Home Monitoring (EHM), work release, treatment, court, DWI, or probation violation clients.

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
Complaint Warrant		Complaint warrants are issued as part of a criminal complaint when the Ramsey County Attorney's Office or one of the city attorney's offices charge a case. Charging by warrant occurs for more serious crimes, and/or when the defendant presents a flight risk, and/or the defendant cannot be located, and/or when the defendant resides out of state
D		
Department of Corrections (MN)	DOC	The Minnesota Department of Corrections is a state law enforcement agency of Minnesota that operates prisons.
Departure		A pronounced sentence other than that recommended in the appropriate cell on the applicable Grid, including a stayed or imposed gross misdemeanor or misdemeanor sentence.
Diagnostic Assessment	DA	Mental health assessment
Disposition		The final determination of a criminal case.
Dispositional Departure - Downward		A downward dispositional departure occurs when the court stays execution of sentence when the guidelines call for execution of sentence.
District/County Attorney	DA	A public official who acts as prosecutor for the state or the federal government in court in a particular district/county.
Domestic Abuse	DA	If committed against a family or household member by a family or household member: physical harm, bodily injury, or assault; the infliction of fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, or assault; or terroristic threats; criminal sexual conduct; sexual extortion.
Domestic Abuse No Contact Order	DANCO	An order issued by a court against a defendant in a criminal proceeding or a juvenile offender in a delinquency proceeding for domestic abuse, harassment or stalking when committed against a family or household member, violation of an order for protection, or violation of a prior domestic abuse no contact order.
Driving While Intoxicated	DWI	The crime of driving a motor vehicle after consuming enough alcohol to raise the blood alcohol content (BAC) above the legal limit.
E		
Effective Supervision Practices	ESP	A locally developed model of evidence-based skills and core correctional practices that guides how to approach supervision of clients.

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
Electronic Home Monitoring	EHM	Program that allows eligible clients to serve their sentence at home and in the community while under the supervision of the Community Alternative Program (CAP).
F		
Felony		A crime for which a sentence of imprisonment for more than one year may be imposed.
G		
Gross Misdemeanor	GM	Any crime which is not a felony or misdemeanor. The maximum fine which may be imposed for a gross misdemeanor is \$3,000.
H		
I		
Incarceration		Confinement in a jail or prison. The act of imprisoning someone or the state of being imprisoned.
Intensive Supervised Release	ISR	Statewide program that provides intensive supervision for the highest-risk individuals released from prison. Supervision includes four face-to-face contacts weekly, electronic home monitoring, mandatory work or school, daily curfews, mandatory restitution, and random drug testing.
J		
Jail		In Ramsey County Corrections, jail is a pre-sentence facility where people go when arrested and/or await trial. If convicted and sentenced to serve time, the person then goes either to a correctional facility or prison, depending on the length of their sentence. Smaller counties do not have separate pre and post sentence facilities, so the term jail may be used more broadly in those settings.
K		
L		
Lane		Term used in Ramsey County's Reducing Revocation Challenge to describe various strategies to address probation revocations.
Law Enforcement Center	LEC	See Adult Detention Center (ADC)
Level of Service/Case Management Inventory	LS/CMI	An assessment that measures the risk and need factors of late adolescent and adult offenders.
M		

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
Mandatory Minimum		The mandatory minimum is a minimum executed sentence duration specified in statute for offenders convicted of certain felony offenses.
Misdemeanor	MM	A crime for which a sentence of not more than 90 days or a fine of not more than \$1,000, or both, may be imposed.
Mothers Against Drunk Driving	MADD	An advocacy organization that is focused on ending impaired driving.
N		
O		
P		
Parole		To release a convict from prison before his or her term is complete. Release is often conditional on good behavior.
Portable Breathalyzer Test	PBT	A device used to estimate a person's blood alcohol content using a breath sample.
Predatory Offender Registration	POR	A system under which an individual convicted of a predatory offense (i.e., sex offense) is required to register with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) for a period of time, usually ten years.
Pre-Sentencing Investigation	PSI	A probation officer's detailed account of a convicted defendant's educational, criminal, family, and social background, conducted at the court's request as an aid in passing sentence. The PSI report will include recommendations for sentencing.
Prison		Post sentence facility for people serving more than one year.
Probation		The process of suspending a sentence, permitting a person to remain free under the supervision of a probation officer instead of serving time in prison.
Probation Officer	PO	An officer appointed to investigate, report on, and supervise the conduct of convicted offenders on probation.
Probation Review Bench Warrant	PRBW	A 60-day provisional warrant that goes out for clients who have fallen out of contact with probation. It is not a formal probation violation but is an active warrant where the client is arrested and will go to the Law Enforcement Center for a probation staff member to get in contact with the client and inform them to connect with their Probation Officer. The client is then released the next workday from the warrant status.
Probation Revocation		Where probation is terminated and results in incarceration.

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
Probation Service Center		Offers supervision services to adults placed on probation in Ramsey County. Services may include, One-on-one support, assistance navigating the probation system, assistance completing court-ordered conditions of probation, information resources and referrals to support providers, remote services
Probation to the Court/Unsupervised Probation		Probation without active supervision with a probation officer. It is a specified time-period, typically 1-3 years, where the client needs to remain law abiding without other probation conditions. Towards the end of the probation term, the court conducts a background check. If the client has remained law abiding, they will be released from the probation term. If the client re-offends, they may be subject to a probation violation.
Probation Violation	PV	A probation violation may be filed with the Court when a client has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of his/her probation sentence. The violation may be due to a new crime/arrest or due to a 'technical' reason (e.g., multiple failures to complete treatment, absconding from supervision).
Probation/Parole Violation Warrant		Probation/parole violation warrants are issued for an offender who is already under supervision with Ramsey County Community Corrections and who has violated their supervision conditions.
Prosecutor		A public officer who conducts criminal proceedings on behalf of the state.
Public Defender	PD	An attorney paid by the county, state, or federal government who is responsible for providing representation to indigent defendants in criminal prosecutions when the courts determine the defendant cannot afford to hire a private attorney.
Q		
R		
Ramsey County	RC	
Ramsey County Attorney's Office	RCAO	See District/County Attorney.
Ramsey County Community Corrections (Department)	RCCC, RCCCD	
Ramsey County Correctional Facility	RCCF/The Workhouse	Post sentence facility for people serving less than one year operated by Ramsey County Community Corrections.
Reducing Revocations Challenge	RRC	National initiative dedicated to transforming probation supervision and reducing the unnecessary failures that contribute to mass incarceration

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
		through the identification, piloting, and testing of promising data-driven solutions.
Response to Offender Misconduct Project	ROMP	Model implemented in 2012 to promote consistency and proportionality in responding to client misconduct.
Restitution		The money that a judge orders a juvenile or adult offender to pay to the victim for out-of-pocket expenses that occurred as a direct result of the crime. Restitution is the financial responsibility of the offender.
Robina Institute		A nonpartisan research institute committed to a criminal justice system that is fair, effective, and accountable. The Robina Institute Partnered with Ramsey County and conducts the research components to the RRC.
Rule 20		Court ordered psychological examination
S		
Saint Paul Opportunity Center	SPOC	Integrated one-stop location connecting adult men and women to critical services to improve their health, income, housing stability and overall well-being. Service delivery at the Opportunity Center features partner organizations in the community, including Catholic Charities, Ramsey County, Minnesota Community Care, services for veterans, health care providers and many others.
Sanction/probation violation sanction		Includes, but is not limited to, electronic monitoring, intensive probation, sentencing to service, reporting to a day reporting center, substance use disorder or mental health treatment or counseling, community work service, remote electronic alcohol monitoring, random drug testing, and participation in an educational or restorative justice program
Sentence		The time to be served in a prison or jail; also includes fine, probation, restitution, and community service.
Sentence to Service	STS	A sentencing alternative for courts that puts carefully selected, nonviolent offenders to work on community improvement projects.
Sex Offender	SO	A person who has been convicted of a crime involving a specific sexual act
Stay of Adjudication	SOA	When a conviction for a felony is not entered on an individual's criminal record, provided they successfully complete probation

Term	Acronym	Description/Definitions
Stay of Execution	SOE	A stay of execution occurs when the court accepts and records a finding or plea of guilty, and a prison sentence is pronounced, but is not executed. If the offender successfully completes the stay, the case is discharged, but the offender continues to have a record of a felony conviction, which is included in criminal history.
Stay of Imposition	SOI	A stay of imposition occurs when the court accepts and records a finding or plea of guilty but does not impose (or pronounce) a prison sentence. If the offender successfully completes the stay, the case is discharged, and the conviction is deemed a misdemeanor, but is still included in criminal history.
Stayed Sentence		When the court gives the convicted person a more lenient sentence in return for the person's cooperation with certain conditions.
Supervised Release	SR	Statewide program that provides supervision for released after a prison term.
T		
Technical Violation		Any violation of a court order of probation, except an allegation of a subsequent criminal act that is alleged in a formal complaint, citation, or petition.
Transferred in Request	TIR	Transferring cases from different counties
U		
Unsheltered Probation Partnership	UPP	Created to meet the needs of people on probation who also experience homelessness. Partnership between RCCC and community non-profit organizations. Staff meet people at shelters, encampments, and outreach meetings.
Urine Analysis	UA	The collection of urine samples and their submission to a laboratory for analysis for drugs or alcohol.
V		
W		
Warrant		Sanction or authorization, as an arrest warrant authorizes a police officer to take an individual into custody.
X		
Y		
Z		