



Massachusetts Parole Board: PRO Supervision

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In response to the increase of identified offenders with high need for treatment for substance abuse and opiate/opioid use in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Parole Board (MPB) submitted an application to the Department of Justice seeking grant funding to combat the ongoing epidemic. On September 19, 2017, the MPB received grant application approval and was awarded federal funding through the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, Smart Supervision: Reducing Prison Populations, Saving Money and Creating Safer Communities, a Second Chance Act Reentry Initiative. The Smart Supervision Program focuses on improving the success of individuals on both parole and probation, and reducing prison admissions by reducing the rate at which individuals under supervision reoffend. The project, Parole Recovery Opportunity (PRO) Supervision, will be funded for three years beginning October 1, 2017 and ending September 30, 2020. The MPB has partnered with the University of Massachusetts – Boston (UMB) in this endeavor for evaluation.



Project Partners

- MPB: Chair, Director of Research and Planning, Chief of Field Services, and Director of Fiscal Services
- UMB: Primary research partner
- Residential treatment providers (North Cottage and Gavin Foundation)
- Learn to Cope
- Sober houses
- Behavioral health counselors

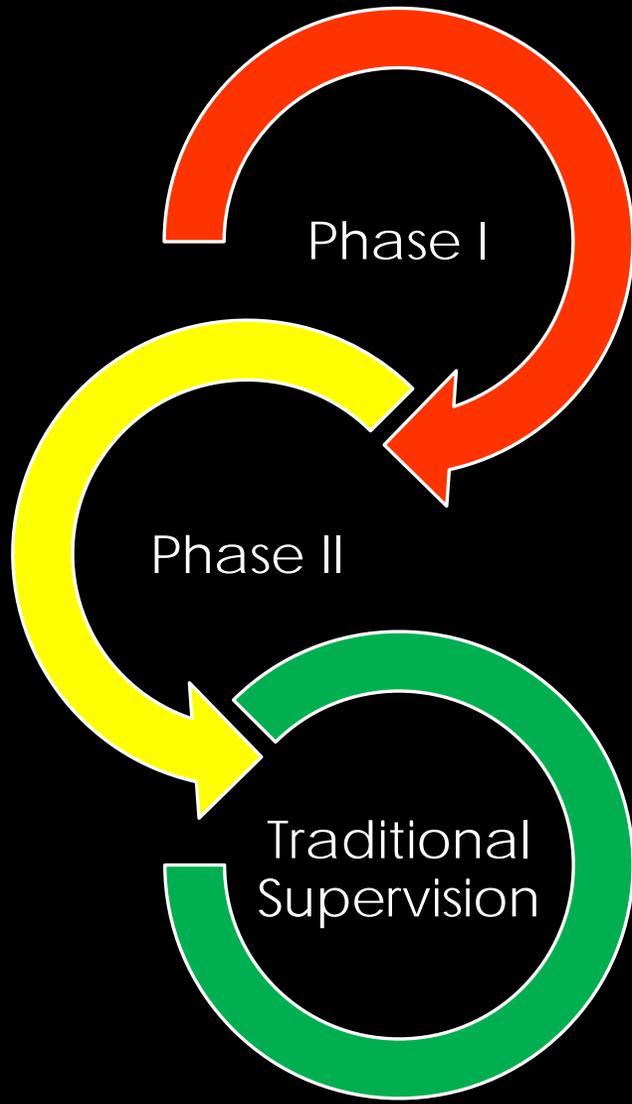
What is PRO Supervision?

PRO Supervision

PRO Supervision is an enhanced supervision that involves increased communication between the parolee and Parole staff, and increased resources for substance use treatment.

Enhanced supervision includes at least one monthly case conference with the assigned Parole Officer and the Parole Supervisor, and at least four additional face-to-face visits between the parolee and the Parole Officer. Two of the four visits, at minimum, must be at the residence of the parolee.

There is currently one Reentry Navigator assigned to each Regional Office in the Commonwealth who is already available to all parolees. The MPB has also partnered with Learn to Cope in this endeavor. Each home sponsor, family member, significant other, or friend is provided with referral information for services from Learn to Cope.



Phase I: Parolee must have a monthly case conference with their Parole Officer and Parole Supervisor. They are required to have at least four face-to-face contacts each month. This phase continues for three months.

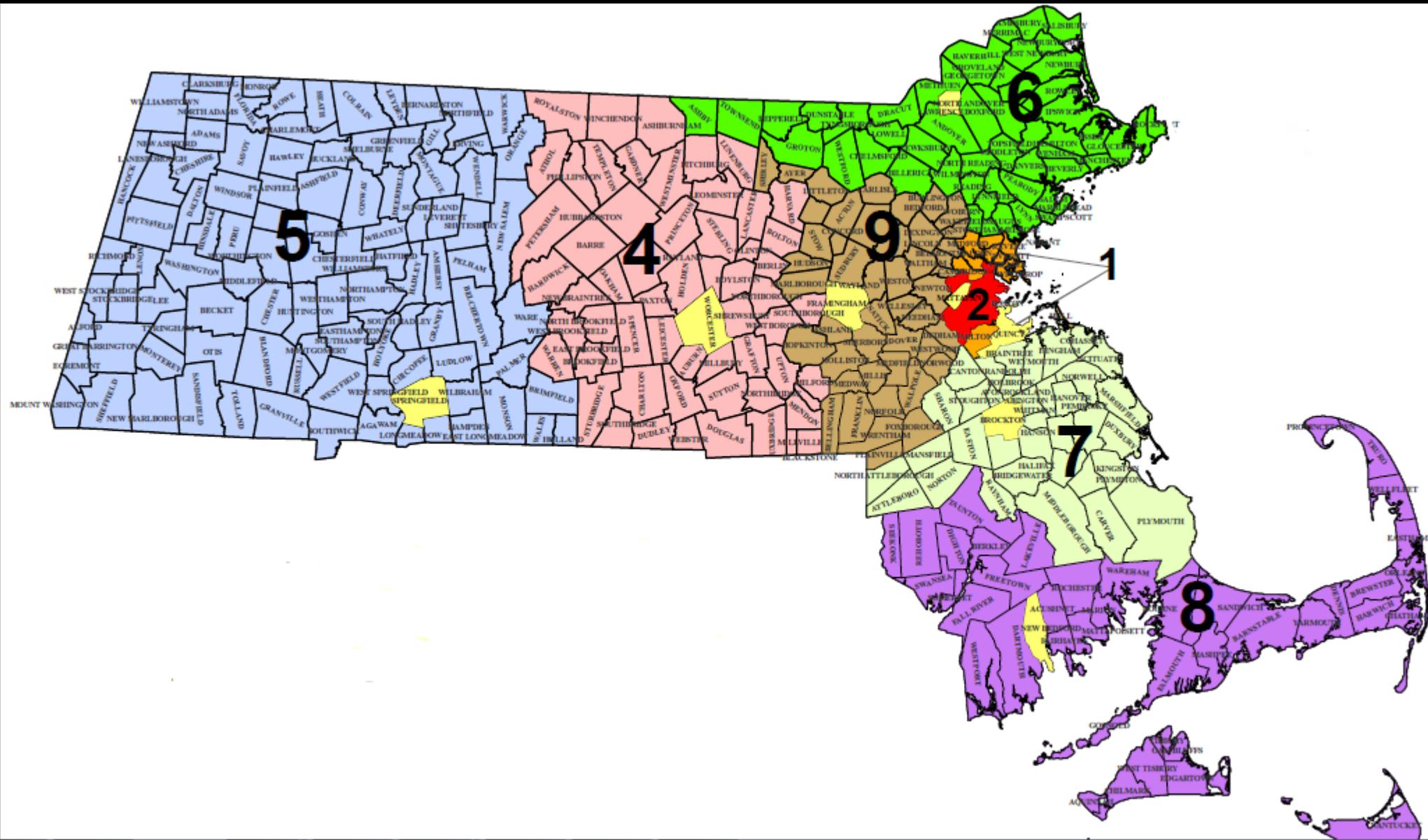
Phase II: After successfully completing three months on PRO supervision, they will then be required to have no less than three face-to-face visits each month for the last three months.

Traditional Supervision: The parolee will be supervised based on a supervision level assessment per policy.

Who is eligible for PRO Supervision?

Eligibility

- Assessed as High or Very High risk to recidivate based on the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI)
- History of opioid/opiate misuse
- Releasing or residing in one of the following Regional Parole Offices: Region 6/6A or Region 8
- PRO participant must voluntarily agree to receive medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and engage in substance abuse counseling
- Priority is given to those who have at least 6 months of supervision, however it is not a requirement



Pathways to PRO Supervision

There are two ways in which an offender can enter PRO:

At Release...

Institutional parole staff will meet with the inmate prior to their release hearing to administer the LS/CMI, as well as discuss parole plans. If the Parole Officer deems that they may be a suitable PRO candidate, they will introduce/review the program with the inmate. If the inmate is interested and willing to participate, they will sign an acknowledgement form which will then be shared with the Board Member(s) on the day of the inmate's release hearing. It is at this time that the Board Member(s) will confirm that the inmate is suitable and will make PRO a condition of their parole supervision.

Relapse...

The MPB has a graduated sanction policy that provides guidelines to ensure that a parolee's actions (violation) is matched with the appropriate treatment, intervention, and or sanction based upon their risk level and violation. In the event that an existing parolee relapses and poses a threat to themselves or others, they may be placed in a halfway back treatment bed instead of a return to custody. Through PRO, the MPB has partnered with treatment providers (North Cottage and Gavin Foundation) to ensure that there is bed availability. This offers an alternative sanction for the parolee, as revocation is sometimes used as an option to keep a parolee safe if they are showing dangerous behavior.

Goals

- SAVE LIVES and reduce the incidence of non-fatal overdoses.
- Reduce criminal activity and/or returns to custody.
- Improve supervision strategies and support a successful transition into the community.
- We would like to have 160 parolees go through PRO Supervision by the end of the grant. We are nearly halfway there as of September 2019.
- We would like to expand this program to the rest of the Commonwealth if this is found to be successful.



**So what do the numbers look
like so far?**

Of the 78 PRO participants...

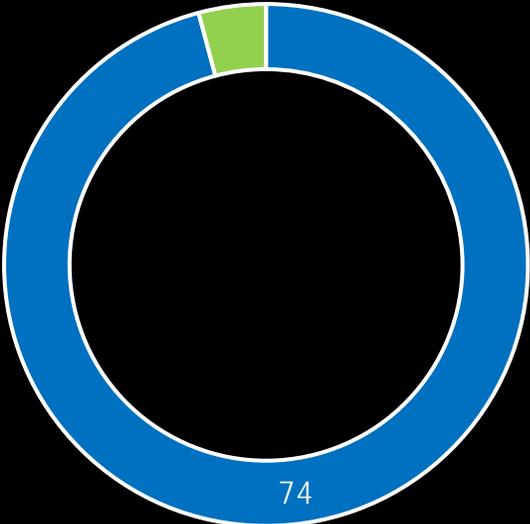
The average age at release to PRO was 36 (range of 22 to 58).

The majority were assessed as high risk (n=50), followed by medium (n=17), very high (n=10), and low (n=1).

The majority were serving a county sentence (n=66) prior to release. Eleven were serving a state sentence, and one was a parolee being supervised through Interstate Compact.

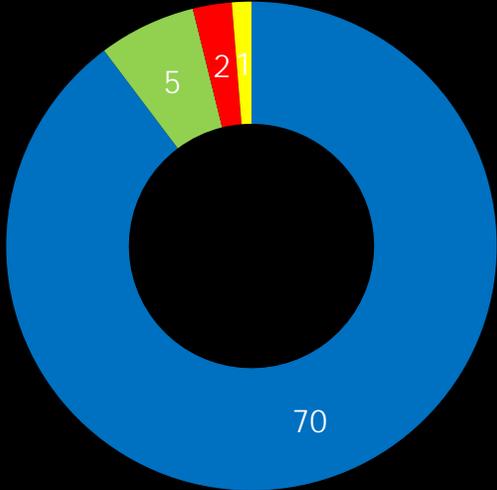
Approximately 2/3 of the cohort had a prior incarceration.

Sex



Male Female

Race/Ethnicity



White Hispanic Black Unknown

Most common substances (positive drug tests):

1. Fentanyl
2. Cocaine
3. THC
4. Suboxone

Forty-two PRO participants had at least one drug or alcohol relapse based on a positive test result. There have been 4 uses of Narcan reported. No fatal overdoses.



Forty-two of the 78 PRO participants had at least 1 graduated sanction (ranged between 1 and 3). The average time to return to custody thus far has been 57 days – the earliest being 3 days and the longest being 163 days,

Sixteen of the PRO participants have had at least one new arraignment, 3 of whom had a new conviction.

PRO Participant Current Status



Case Study #1: Successful Completion

Tom Brady is a Caucasian male who was released from a county facility after serving just over 8 months for 8 charges, including assault and battery, violating abuse prevention orders, and operating a vehicle with a suspended license. He had been denied parole at his initial hearing, however did receive a positive vote to PRO upon a reconsideration hearing. He was assessed as high risk and was 39 years old at the time of release.

Throughout his parole supervision, Brady resided with his mother in an apartment in Lawrence, MA. The home sponsor (mother) was provided a referral to Learn to Cope during the Field Parole Officer's home investigation and prior to Brady's release. It is unclear if she decided to use any of the resources available to her. The parolee was unemployed at the time of release and received benefits. After several weeks without a job, the parolee was issued a graduated sanction for failure to secure employment. He subsequently admitted to alcohol use and received a second graduated sanction. As a result, Brady had a case conference and was instructed to increase urine testing and attend OCC. He would ultimately obtain full-time employment at a painting company at approximately 5 months into his supervision. Brady did unfortunately have three relapses (cocaine) that were caught during routine drug testing, however via case conference and acknowledgement from the parolee, he was able to remain in the community.

Brady completed 6 months of PRO without a return to custody and subsequently discharged from parole. He has no new criminal activity and at his last meeting, reported attending appointments with a housing specialist to live on his own. He also was receiving Vivitrol monthly during his entire supervision.

Case Study #2: Unsuccessful Termination

John Smith is a Caucasian male who was released from a county facility after serving approximately 3 months for 6 charges, including misuse of credit cards, identification fraud, perjury, and negligent operation of a vehicle. He was assessed as very high risk and was 32 years old at the time of release. Upon release, Smith lived with his mother in her home in Sandwich, MA. The home sponsor (mother) was provided a referral to Learn to Cope during the Field Parole Officer's first home visit after Smith's release. It is unclear if she decided to use any of the resources available to her.

Smith did not immediately secure employment, and relied on family assistance financially. He did attend counseling but never provided verification that he received any form of medication-assisted treatment per his conditions. Nearly 1 month post-release, during an unannounced home visit, the Field Parole Officer was greeted at the front door by Smith's mother who said that Smith was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and that she wants him removed from her home immediately. Upon discovering Smith in his bedroom, he did appear to be under the influence. According to Smith, he had just taken a single dose of Xanax which was newly prescribed the previous day. Smith's brother produced a bottle that indicated that Smith had consumed 39 of the 60 pills prescribed.

The parolee became extremely combative and assaultive. At that point, it was determined that Smith was going to be detained and returned to custody. Local police were called to assist in the arrest.

Successes and Obstacles in the Process

Successes

- Support of leadership
- The working relationship between MPB and UMB
- Communication and data-sharing
- Grant adjustment process



Obstacles

- Recruitment of offenders
- Approval process in Massachusetts to become a vendor
- Manual data collection



Evaluation

UMB has been tasked with conducting analyses and a program evaluation based on secondary data collected by MPB Research staff, conducting interviews with PRO parolees and Field Parole Officers who have supervised PRO parolees, and finally focus groups with service providers and reentry staff.

- A UMB research assistant will be doing some preliminary analysis of quantitative data in the next two months, however the final analysis will be done in 2020. A comparison group will also be used in the final analysis.
- Both UMB research assistants have conducted 13 parolee interviews combined (goal of 20) thus far. They have also interviewed at least 5 Field Parole Officers (goal of 15).
- Focus groups will begin Fall/Winter 2019.

Interview Themes

- Neighborhood was not mentioned as contributing to difficulties but participants noted taking active steps to avoid certain areas and people that may impact cravings/triggers.
- Many reported that while incarcerated, Vivitrol was known to have bad side effects, however agreeing to receive it will help you “get out”.
- Some had to try multiple types of MAT before finding what works best.
- Having MAT and counseling in the same office has been helpful for the parolee, including therapy.
- Some parolees suggested alternatives to AA/NA, such as meditation groups or other types of self-help groups.
- Working and feeling a self-sufficiency was important to staying clean. A sense of pride and accomplishment was felt when working a “stable job”. Work was not limited to paid employment, but also volunteering, helping neighbors, or working odd jobs.
- Obtaining employment relatively quickly upon release helps to minimize free time.
- Nearly all participants reported that their offense was related to substance use.
- Parolees who had previously been on traditional parole reported that PRO was better in comparison because they feel there is more support and resources.

Interview Feedback

Challenges

- "The demands on my time, transportation, job – this place is not open late – are ridiculous."
- "I don't know how I'd do it if I didn't work for myself. Seriously, I'd have to miss a ton of work."

Relationship with Parole Officer was reported to be the most important and beneficial aspect of PRO.

- "She works with me, meets me halfway."
- "He worked to help me find a new group to go to because the old group just made it worse for me."
- "She makes me feel comfortable."
- "Every single time I call he picks up, it doesn't matter when it is. He's really there for me."

Questions? Comments?



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