

# DOSAGE PRO<sub>x</sub>BATION:

## Behavioral Indicators Assessment Manual

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December 2020

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# Dosage Probation: Behavioral Indicators Assessment Manual

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Special thanks to Jennifer Mackey, Program Associate, Center for Effective Public Policy, for her substantive contributions to the development of this document, and to Mark Carey, President, The Carey Group, for his invaluable review.

To those who willingly pilot tested dosage probation and participated in countless training and feedback sessions with us, we thank you for your dedication, commitment, and support:

- Washington County, Minnesota, Community Corrections: Tom Adkins, Director (former); Terry Thomas, Director (current); Ren Clinton, Division Manager; and staff
- Napa County, California, Probation Department: Mary Butler, Chief Probation Officer (former); Amanda Gibbs, Assistant Chief Probation Officer; and staff.

The National Institute of Corrections, in partnership with the Center for Effective Public Policy, has developed this resource to highlight the innovative concept of dosage probation and to share the successes, challenges, and lessons learned. This model of community supervision is not yet fully tested.

December 2020 | Project Number 19CS03GLA6

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# Introduction

People supervised under the dosage probation model are offered the opportunity to improve their life course and earn successful completion of probation through active engagement in activities demonstrated to be effective at reducing risk of recidivism. In order to be successfully discharged, probationers are required to complete court-ordered requirements, such as community service hours, payment of court costs, and payment of restitution; meet dosage targets based upon their assessed level of risk (i.e., 100 hours for moderate risk, 200 hours for moderate–high risk, and 300 hours for high risk);<sup>1</sup> and demonstrate sufficient behavioral change.<sup>2</sup>

Some departments use highly sensitive risk/needs assessments that will indicate behavioral change over the course of supervision. For those departments whose risk/needs assessments are not highly sensitive, this manual presents a process for assessing the behavioral indicators that serve as evidence of a person’s potential for reduced recidivism risk.

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<sup>1</sup> These targets are based on the extant dosage research. For a summary of studies about differential dosage, see *Dosage Probation: Rethinking the Structure of Probation Sentences* by Madeline Carter and Richard J. Sankovitz (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/027940.pdf>). For more information about counting dosage, see the department’s *Counting Dosage Manual*.

<sup>2</sup> Not all departments participating in dosage probation require the demonstration of sufficient behavioral change as a condition of completing dosage probation.

# Behavioral Indicators Assessment Requirements

A behavioral indicators assessment should measure three facets of probationer behavior that are linked to meaningful change:

- **motivation to change,**
- **prosocial attitudes,** and
- **prosocial skills.**

Departments may already have in place assessments to measure motivation and attitude. If they do not, it is recommended that they identify validated tools for use in the behavioral indicators assessment. At the time of this writing, a validated skills assessment was not available, so a sample tool for assessing prosocial skills was created for use by dosage probation officers (see Appendix A).<sup>3</sup>

To ensure probationers are cognizant of the fact that successful discharge will be determined by a combination of achievement of their dosage hours and positive behavioral indicators (as well as completion of court-ordered requirements), and to be certain they have the opportunity to take positive corrective action if the behavioral indicators suggest this is necessary, dosage probation officers should:

- **review with probationers at the onset of dosage probation the behavioral indicators** that will be considered when determining whether sufficient behavioral change has occurred,
- **conduct a formal behavioral indicators assessment** and specifically discuss its outcomes during specified time intervals, and
- **provide informal feedback** regarding behavioral progress on an ongoing basis.

The recommended time intervals at which a behavioral indicators assessment should be conducted are as follows:

- **Time Interval 1:** Appointment 3;
- **Time Interval 2:** 50% of dosage target is met; and
- **Time Interval 3:** 100% of dosage target is met.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the tool in Appendix A has not been empirically tested.

<sup>4</sup> Departments may decide to increase the number of intervals (e.g., 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of dosage target met, or some combination thereof) and, in doing so, must consider the ability of the assessment instruments chosen for the behavioral indicators assessment to accurately identify changes in behavior over time.

# Conducting a Behavioral Indicators Assessment

The following is the recommended process for conducting a behavioral indicators assessment:

1. The dosage probation officer should **assess the probationer's motivation**, prosocial attitudes, and prosocial skills using the tools chosen by the department.
2. The dosage probation officer should **independently score the tools** and use the results to complete the Dosage Probation Progress Checklist (Appendix B). The Dosage Probation Progress Checklist should also indicate the probationer's progress toward meeting both their dosage target and their court-ordered conditions.
3. The dosage probation officer should **review the results** of the behavioral indicators assessment and corresponding Dosage Probation Progress Checklist with their unit supervisor, make any necessary revisions, and obtain approval to share the results with the probationer.
4. The dosage probation officer should meet with the probationer to **discuss the Dosage Probation Progress Checklist** and provide constructive feedback. The dosage probation officer must be prepared to discuss the reasoning behind each rating and continuing expectations for the probationer to be successful. For Time Intervals 2 and 3, if there were any changes since the previous assessment, the dosage probation officer should provide appropriate affirmation for any improvements and, where improvements are not noted, encourage the probationer to more fully consider the advantages of changing the factors in their life that led to conflict with the law.

The above steps must be completed prior to formally indicating that a probationer is ready for successful discharge. If changes are not noted at Time Interval 3, the department should establish a protocol for reviewing the probationer's case (e.g., the review might be conducted by the dosage probation officer, their supervisor, and others, as appropriate) for appropriateness for discharge when the dosage target is met.

# Appendix A: Prosocial Skills Rating Scale (PSRS)<sup>5</sup>

Probationer's Name	Last	First
Dosage Probation Officer's Name	Last	First
SID	Date	

## Behavior Ratings

For each behavioral dimension below, mark the rating that best describes the probationer's behavior. Base the rating on your observations as well as any and all verified information about the probationer's **current** behavior. When behavior crosses multiple ratings, select the lower rating.

### 1. Compliance with Laws and Rules

- 3 Consistently shows an appreciation for and complies with rules and laws.
- 2 Mostly obeys laws and rules but some minor infractions noted.
- 1 Demonstrates defiance of rules/laws, and/or numerous minor and/or presence of major infractions noted.

### 2. Prosocial Relationships

- 3 Maintains and appreciates relationships with prosocial peers and/or significant others.
- 2 Works to establish boundaries around, or breaking connections with, antisocial associates.
- 1 Retains connections with antisocial associates.

### 3. Honesty

- 3 Consistently tells the truth even when doing so may have undesirable consequences.
- 2 Mostly tells the truth even when doing so may have undesirable consequences.
- 1 Demonstrates dishonesty.

### 4. Emotional Regulation

- 3 Consistently demonstrates good emotional management; controls impulses and emotions even under stressful conditions.
- 2 Mostly demonstrates effort to control emotions and impulses but occasionally has difficulty doing so.
- 1 Frequently becomes angry and/or acts impulsively; demonstrates little or no effort or ability to manage emotions/impulses.

<sup>5</sup> This tool is provided as an example only. It has not been empirically tested. Agencies may have other assessment tools they can use in place of this to measure changes in prosocial skills.

## 5. Conflict Resolution Skills

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- 3 Consistently demonstrates effective conflict resolution skills.
- 2 Mostly demonstrates effective conflict resolution skills but sometimes uses inappropriate means to resolve conflict.
- 1 Engages in inappropriate and ineffective means to resolve conflict.

## 6. Empathic Behavior

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- 3 Consistently demonstrates compassion for others; accurately assesses and considers the impact of behavior on others.
- 2 Sometimes demonstrates compassion for others; at times, accurately assesses and considers the impact of behavior on others but at other times falls short.
- 1 Does not demonstrate compassion for others; appears to act without regard for impact on others.

## 7. Thinking Patterns

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- 3 Consistently demonstrates prosocial patterns of thought and applies these skills to decision making.
- 2 At times demonstrates prosocial patterns of thought and applies these skills to decision making.
- 1 Displays harmful and/or destructive patterns of thought/decision making.

## 8. Accepts Responsibility

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- 3 Accepts full responsibility for behavior.
- 2 At times accepts responsibility while at other times may rationalize, minimize, or deny responsibility.
- 1 Does not accept responsibility; consistently makes excuses and blames others.

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

## Scoring Guide

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Feedback should be provided regardless of rating, with strong affirmations for ratings of “3,” expressions of concern for ratings of “1,” and concrete methods to improve for ratings of “1” and “2.”

For purposes of completing the Dosage Probation Progress Checklist:

- **scores between 8 and 15** indicate significant concerns and should be rated as “Fair”;
- **scores between 16 and 23** indicate positive progress, with opportunities for improvements available, and should be rated as “Good”; and
- **a score of 24** indicates an exemplary demonstration of prosocial skills and should be rated as “Very Good.”



# Appendix B: Dosage Probation Progress Checklist

Probationer's Name	Last	First
Dosage Probation Officer's Name	Last	First
SID	Date	

Evidence of Motivation to Change in Need Areas



Fair



Good



Very good

Evidence of Prosocial Attitudes



Fair



Good



Very good

Evidence of Prosocial Skills



Fair



Good



Very good

Progress Toward Meeting Dosage Target



Fair



Good



Very good

Progress Toward Meeting Court-Ordered Conditions



Fair



Good



Very good

**Scoring:** Successful completion of dosage probation requires:

- **100%** rating in target dosage,
- **100%** rating in court-ordered conditions, and
- ratings of **“Very Good”** for the remaining scales, with **one** rating of **“Good”** allowed.

Dosage Probation Officer	Probationer
Unit Supervisor	Date Reviewed