

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ICM Phase III Project

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Beginning in 1999, courts have been required by Washington State law to impose electronic home monitoring sentences in lieu of actual jail time for DUI offenses (RCW46.61.502). In Kitsap County the driving force behind electronic home monitoring is overcrowding in the county jail. With a design capacity of 200 inmates, the jail frequently blossoms to over 250. Kitsap Jail capacity is now discussed in terms of "floor space" rather than "bed space". New intake standards established by correctional facilities are geared toward making sure the most violent offenders stay behind bars. As a result, cities must explore alternative options for the approximately 500 non-violent, minor offenders that are currently on the waiting list to serve jail time.

The current study conducted in the Fall of 1999 by the Poulsbo Municipal Court extends previous research by examining successful programs being managed in Washington State. The objective of this research was to determine the potential uses and application of electronic monitoring and to develop recommendations for implementation. The study addresses whether, and how, offenders' are screened for electronic monitoring, including the use of treatment-based requirements versus standard prison sentences. We also explore factors that influence effectiveness regarding recidivism and cost.

To address these questions, two types of data was collected and analyzed on issues relevant to imposition and alternative sentencing decisions. First, written surveys were sent to fifty electronic monitoring sites. Twenty programs responded with descriptive accounts of current programs. This information was needed to illustrate commonly shared program characteristics as well as variations in their structure, operations and goals. Second, we gathered information from an in-depth follow-up telephone interview with these twenty agencies on characteristics of offenders' eligibility and exclusions, frequency of contact, and duration of supervision.

Three central findings emerge from this study. First, this study demonstrates home detention is one of the most cost effective means used in the Criminal Justice System today. It allows for a sentenced person to be monitored at a specific location for up to 24 hours a day using regular telephone lines to maintain its "custody", and at little or not cost to the taxpayer. The second finding central to this report is that an Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP) is a simple system to implement. The sentenced person is fitted with a tamper-sensitive ankle device or watch that not only reacts to the signal strength of the receiver/sending unit attached to a normal telephone line but also to body proximity. The device is water-repellant to allow for showering, and has a low battery signal, which notifies the command center far in advance to allow for uninterrupted service. The "prisoner" is required to stay within a specified distance to the receiver/sending unit during prescribed times or a message is automatically dialed to the Command Center telephonically. As 'failsafes' to this system of

detention the watch/ankle unit, sending unit and the telephone line are integrated so that tampering to any or all of the components will result in a "violations". The third finding, which I found the most advantageous was the agencies that established policies and procedures before beginning their programs. When considering the implementation of an EMP, agencies should be aware of the risks of placing an offender in the community. Public safety is the primary concern. EMP's should have an orientation program for the offender as well as all appropriate individuals with whom he or she resides. This meeting should detail the rules and regulations of the program. By instructing participants on all program rules, restrictions and requirements at the orientation/installation interview the participant is more likely to successfully complete the program.

Poulsbo Municipal Court concluded that a properly run electronic monitoring program benefits the community because offenders are paying taxes by staying employed, paying for the EMP costs, taking care of their families, attending counseling/treatment and sometimes even going to school to increase their future employment options. It reduces prison and jail overcrowding by providing a viable alternative to incarceration and with safeguards in place, the EMP agency is a safe, effective electronic monitoring program. Public and political interest will continue to call for the development of new approaches to criminal justice problems. Electronic monitoring will surely be high on the list.

Welcome to the 21st century jail, your home!

BENEFITS OF ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAMS

- REDUCE OPERATING COSTS
- REDUCE JAIL OVERCROWDING
- USE AS AN ALTERNATIVE SANCTION (PRE-TRIAL/POST-TRIAL)
- PROVIDES SENTENCING OPTIONS
- ENHANCEMENT TO SUPERVISION FOR PAROLE/PROBATION
- FLEXIBLE
- COMMUNITY BENEFITS (SCHOOL, COUNSELING ATTENDANCE)

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