

Probation Case Assessment

Derek Stevens

Longwood University

SOWK 392: Junior Internship

Prof. Janie Brazier

April 14, 2023

Identifying and Background Information

John Doe was referred to Farmville Probation and Parole after being arrested and charged with Possession Schedule I or II drug and Driving After Forfeiture of License. He is 48 years of age and entered the correctional system because of the charges. He appeared in Prince Edward Circuit Court in June 2021 where he was then placed on supervised probation for a period of two years. John Doe was also ordered to pay all court costs at \$35.00 a month starting in July 2022, complete any mental health evaluations as directed by the Probation Officer and follow any treatment recommendations stemming from the evaluation, abstain from the use of alcohol, illegal and legal drugs unless he can provide a prescription (including marijuana), complete substance use evaluation and treatment directed by the Probation Officer, and finally, he cannot petition the court for modification of the sentence to the charge. As well as complying with the supervised probation conditions such as obeying all federal, state, and local laws, and reporting any arrest (including traffic tickets) to his Probation Officer. He was officially sentenced with five years suspended, two years of probation, including 10 years of good behavior.

During his time with Farmville Probation and Parole, there were many violations that played a role in how he had socialized as a client in the agency. While he may have been compliant with showing up to the agency, the client was not compliant with the treatment plan which is a direct violation of the supervision conditions. In November 2022, he was the focus of a major violation because he had tested positive for methamphetamines on five separate drug tests. The Court then sentenced him to five years suspended, two years probation, and five years of good behavior. The client came into the office immediately following court and signed new supervision conditions, which are the same as above. At the time of writing, the client has another major violation for positive drug tests for methamphetamines.

As for family and environmental factors, John Doe has three siblings and one son. He is in contact with his father but has not made any contact with his mom due to personal reasons. It was noted in the file that the client does not have great relations with his cousin, as the client stated that the cousin is “going to get back at him” for going to the police with information regarding the cousin. It was also noted in his file that his drug use started when he was a teenager, after he felt like his family had “betrayed” him throughout his struggle with mental health while he was a child.

Presenting Problem(s), Service Plan, Impression

The client has two main presenting problems. The client has a drug addiction to amphetamines, which is a problem that has caused several major violations throughout his time on probation. There have been several positive drug tests which have resulted in the filing of violations as well as court appearances for supervision violations. The other main presenting problem would be the mental health of the clients. Deteriorating mental health due to his continued use of methamphetamines or even the stress of probation plays a heavy role in the successfulness of the client while he is on probation.

The substance abuse issue was to be addressed when the client had signed up for treatment with Claiborne and Associates, but he was soon discharged due to several absences. In February 2023, the client completed another substance abuse evaluation with Horizon Behavioral Health but as of the time of writing, has not begun intensive outpatient therapy. In terms of overall case plans, the client was tested through a computerized questionnaire (COMPAS) to help rate the client’s needs that are more probable, like anger.

In terms of the best way of treatment for the client, the best way that would make more sense would be to address the substance abuse issues first. Helping the client manage their

substance abuse may also lead to a management in mental health, which would then hopefully end the use of methamphetamines. Another problem occurs with this topic due to the fact that the client chooses to not go to any substance abuse or mental health services. The current focus should be substance abuse, which will allow for the learning of different coping mechanisms in order to manage both substance abuse and mental health problems. As of the time of writing, the client is not functioning well because he is still using methamphetamines and refuses to try and manage it, even after multiple times of him saying he would go to treatment.

Policy Implications

During the services with the client, there were not any policies that played an important role in the care for the client. The only applicable policy for the situation would have to be the supervision policy for Virginia Department of Corrections, which set the foundation for the supervision level at which the client was placed at. While community supervision was the best result for the client considering the charges, practitioners should also look at the focus of how the community is not helping the client. It was not noted in the file but if the client is still in contact with the same people who may supply drugs for the client to use or just overall not a good influence, it can create the same environment that the client was in originally that resulted in his charges.

Applicable Theory

In terms of a theory that connects to the case, a major highlight would be a criminal justice theory called self-control theory. Self-control theory highlights that individuals commit crime for the short-term benefits while not looking ahead at the long-term repercussions of the act (Burt, 2020). In the instance of the client's substance abuse, the short-term benefit would be the high from the continued use of methamphetamines. The long-term repercussion would be

continued supervision violations and longer time on supervised probation. As part of the theory states, there is a recognition of benefits from criminal activity that are usually minor with severe risk (Burt, 2020). This applies directly to the case because the client continues to engage in that behavior for the benefit, however we cannot be sure that the client truly understands what that benefit is doing to their body.

There also might be a direct correlation between labeling theory and self-control theory. In a more specific sense, labeling theory outlines the attachment of stigma to certain groups, like the word criminal to those who have broken the law, which then would ultimately change the behavior that the person is executing in society (Nickerson, 2023). In terms of the connection to self-control theory, because the idea behind labeling theory outlines the stigmatization behind the label, self-control directly links to that because of the behavior that may have been outlined (Nickerson, 2023).

Ethical/Diversity Considerations

In terms of considerations for the client, the individual is identified as a criminal which then may disadvantage him from employment or housing. There is also a chance that the client may not have family to rely on when they are on probation for stable housing, and in this case, luckily the client has the availability to stay with another family member for stable housing. The client is also employed, but due to him being a high case, that requires him to take off a day once a month in order to complete probation. The client is also a Black man, which presents its own disadvantages like going into the “criminal” stereotype as well as societal implications like experiences of oppression and racism.

Termination Procedures

Termination was meant to be in June, however, due to the client consistently testing positive for methamphetamines and receiving more possession charges, the period of services has extended until 2025. In general, the plan to get offenders off of supervised probation would be for them to have stable employment and stable housing, and as of the time of writing the client has been able to have stable employment because of a new job. The client stays with his sibling and it was noted in the file that he is trying to get an apartment on his own. This could help lower his supervision level, he is at a high, and allow for lower supervision in order to help start the transition off of supervision.

Conclusion (what would I do differently)

In conclusion, there is not a lot that I would have done differently in this case. It covered the multitude of concepts that go into the case and allowed for the rest to have been done by the client. Because the file did not have a lot of information of client conversations, what I can assume from that is that I would have done more empowering for the client in order for them to have that realization that what they are doing to their body is not what they are supposed to be doing to it. I would also have that conversation focusing on the issues present and how the client feels about them and what we could do in order to best help the client, but I cannot assume that a conversation like that has not happened because client conversations are not usually kept in a file and are usually made a note into the system that Virginia Department of Corrections uses.

References

- Burt, C. H. (2020, January). *Self-control and crime: Beyond gottfredson and Hirschi's theory*. Annual review of criminology. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8095718/>
- Nickerson, C (2023, February 24). *Labeling theory of deviance in sociology: Definitions & examples*. Labeling Theory of Deviance. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/labeling-theory.html>