
Alignment Between Supervision Conditions and Risk and Needs in Iowa Parole



ROBINA INSTITUTE
OF CRIMINAL LAW AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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March 2024

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared with generous support from Arnold Ventures.

Thanks to Erin Harbinson, Director of the Criminal Justice Institute in Hawaii, for helping to conceive of this project when she was a Research Scholar at the Robina Institute. Thanks also to Lily Gleicher for the initial data collection and cleaning.

Special thanks to the Iowa DOC staff who provided multiple rounds of data and answered many, many questions on our end, as well as the Iowa parole board members and administrative law judges who provided insight and feedback on the analysis.

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Executive Summary

This research memo provides an overview of the findings from the examination of alignment between supervision conditions and risk and needs for individuals released on parole in Iowa. This work was done as part of the Aligning Supervision Conditions with Risk and Needs (ASCRN) project, which aims to identify opportunities for improving the effectiveness of parole by aligning conditions with individuals' criminogenic needs and risk level. The goal was to evaluate whether condition setting in Iowa reflected a Robina-developed model for setting conditions with Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) principles, which includes incorporating risk level and using conditions to target criminogenic needs.¹ In addition, this report summarizes the changes made by the Iowa Board of Parole to their conditions in 2023.

The analysis in Iowa revealed several key findings:

- 1. The overwhelming majority of parole conditions given in Iowa are made up of standard conditions that are applied to all individuals on parole, regardless of their risk level. Standard conditions fail to reflect the variations in risk and needs among individuals, and they often do not provide targeted support for behavioral change.**
- 2. In line with RNR principles, individuals with higher risk levels tend to receive a greater number of additional conditions in the regular parole group. However, this was not the case with the special sentence (i.e., sex offender supervision) parole group.**
- 3. Though most individuals released on parole in Iowa had a risk assessment, the majority were not given a needs assessment. Thus, most individuals on parole had their conditions set without the consideration of their criminogenic needs in an actuarial format.**
- 4. There is a lack of alignment between conditions and needs in certain areas, such as substance abuse, impulse control, problem-solving skills, and employment. Some individuals receive targeted conditions they don't need, according to their assessments, while others who show a high need in these areas don't receive the necessary targeted conditions.**
- 5. A significant portion of revocations are due to technical violations of conditions rather than new criminal behavior.**

Based on these findings, recommendations are made to improve the alignment between supervision conditions and risk and needs factors. These recommendations include minimizing standard conditions, individualizing additional conditions based on criminogenic needs, utilizing evidence-based approaches to address needs, ensuring access to comprehensive needs assessment information for parole board members, and keeping conditions to the minimum necessary to ensure compliance and assist with rehabilitation.

In 2023, partially as a result of our work together, the Iowa Board of Parole removed low-value conditions that did not assist with public safety and rehabilitation and shifted several targeting conditions from the standard conditions list to the special conditions list to allow for better individualization.

¹ Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice. (2023). *Policy Brief: Aligning Supervision Conditions with the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Framework*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Introduction

This memo is part of the Aligning Supervision Conditions with Risk and Needs (ASCRN) project, which aims to shift the focus of community supervision toward promoting success through changes in the imposition of probation and parole conditions. The central hypothesis of the project is that by aligning probation and parole conditions with individuals' criminogenic needs and risk levels, the likelihood of successful rehabilitation will increase.² As part of this project, the Robina Institute developed [a model for setting conditions with Risk-Needs-Responsivity \(RNR\) principles](#),³ which included moving away from restrictions on behavior and using conditions to target criminogenic needs. To transition toward this form of condition setting, we needed first to understand the existing process for determining conditions and the role of risk and needs assessments, if any, in this process.

To determine this, we collaborated with two parole sites and one probation site to examine their practices. This memo presents our findings specifically regarding the parole condition-setting process employed by the Iowa Board of Parole. This report first looks at whether there is a relationship between parole conditions and RNR principles in Iowa parole releases, then outlines the changes the Board made to their conditions based on our work there. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the current practices, we were able to identify opportunities for improvement and make informed recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of supervision conditions.

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- ² See Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Edward J. Latessa, and A.M. Holsinger, *The Risk Principle in Action: What Have We Learned From 13,676 Offenders and 97 Correctional Programs?*, 52(1) *Crime & Delinquency* 77-93 (2006) (suggesting that supervision conditions should be aligned with a person's risk and needs).
- ³ Mitchell, K., Laskorunsky, J., Ruhland, E., and Dean, T. (2023). *Policy Brief: Aligning Supervision Conditions with the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Framework*. Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice.

Background

Conditions refer to the requirements that individuals on probation and parole must adhere to during their period of community supervision. For individuals on parole, this occurs after they have served time in prison and are released into the community under supervision. Conversely, individuals on probation undergo this period of community supervision as an alternative to incarceration.

There are two ways individuals in Iowa can be released from prison: through affirmative action taken by the parole board, which includes release to the community or work release, or by serving the maximum term of their sentence. In cases where parole is granted, the Iowa Board of Parole, comprising five members appointed by the governor, establishes the initial conditions for supervision.

Parole conditions in Iowa consist of both statutory and administrative requirements. Statutorily, the Parole Board can impose conditions such as DNA sampling, community service, and progress toward a high school equivalency degree.⁴ Administrative rules outline standard conditions that apply to all parolees and cover areas such as movement restrictions, treatment, substance use, and economic obligations.⁵ These standard conditions encompass eight separate rules, which can be divided into a total of thirty-five individual requirements (see Appendix A). In addition, there are sixteen additional conditions that can be set by the board and ten “Community Based Conditions” which can be set by parole officers (see Appendix A).

The parole agreement, which parolees sign, outlines the standard and any special conditions. Parole officers have the authority to add or remove certain conditions. The Parole Board and Department of Corrections can also modify conditions after they are set. For a more detailed look at the condition-setting process in Iowa Parole, please refer to our sister report, [*Parole Condition Setting in Iowa*](#).⁶

⁴ Iowa Code § 906.4 (3) (2022).

⁵ Iowa Admin. Code 201-45.2 (906) (2022).

⁶ Kelly Lyn Mitchell, Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice, *Parole Condition Setting in Iowa: A Report in a Series on Aligning Supervision Conditions with Risk and Needs* (2023), Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice.

Methods

The findings in this report stem from the analysis of an administrative dataset encompassing 3,485 individuals released on parole in Iowa between March 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020. The analysis in Part I excludes 417 individuals who were released on special sentence parole, who are analyzed separately in Part II. These individuals have been convicted of serious sexual offenses, which trigger a ten-year or lifetime parole term. Both groups were monitored for violations and revocations until October 31, 2022, providing a follow-up of one year and ten months to two years and nine months, depending on the release date.

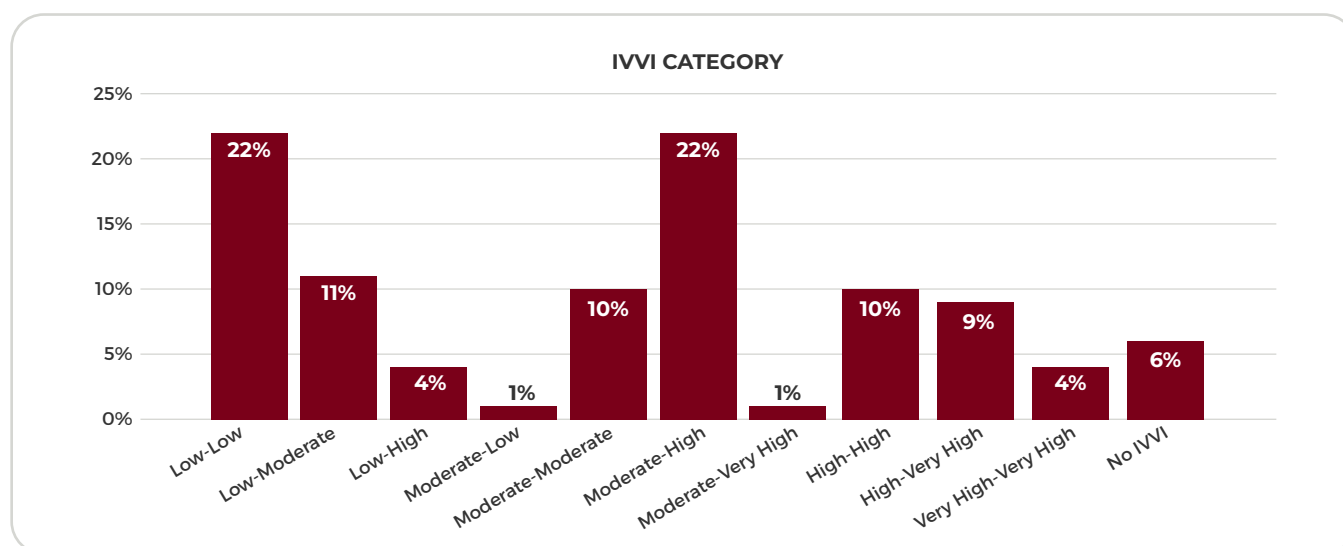
Part I: Regular Parole Group

Alignment Between Risk Level and Assigned Conditions

All individuals entering prison are initially assessed with the Iowa Violence and Victimization Instrument (IVVI).⁷ This instrument was developed by clinicians in Iowa to estimate the risk of future criminal behavior among individuals released on parole or probation.⁸ Figure 1 below provides the distribution of individuals (N=3,068) released on parole across different IVVI risk categories. These categories predict the likelihood of violent recidivism and any recidivism involving a victim (a combination of violent and property offenses).

The majority of individuals in the sample are classified into the Low Violence-Low Victimization and Moderate Violence-High Victimization categories, each comprising 22% of the total sample. Approximately 6% of individuals have no IVVI score. It is unclear whether this was due to missingness in the administrative data or whether they were never assessed. However, since this data was taken from the parole system, we can assume that the parole board did not have access to IVVI scores for 6% of individuals when making the release decision or setting conditions.

Figure 1. Percentage of Individuals with Each Violence-Victimization Risk Score (N=3,068)



⁷ IDOC Policy IS-CL-03, Classification (Effective May 2021).

⁸ Prell, L., Vitacco, M., and Zavondy, D. (2016). Predicting violence and recidivism in a large sample of males on probation or parole. *International Journal of Law and Public Psychiatry*. Volume 49, Part A.

On average, individuals released on regular parole receive 2.4 additional, or special, conditions that are added to their standard conditions. Alignment between condition setting and risk, needs, and responsivity (RNR) principles implies that individuals in lower IVVI levels should have fewer conditions compared to those in higher levels. Figure 2 illustrates that the average number of additional conditions assigned by the board generally decreases as the risk level decreases. For example, an individual in the Low Violence-Low Victimization category would receive an average of 1.9 additional conditions, while an individual in the Very High Violence-Very High Victimization category would receive an average of 3.3 additional conditions. This indicates that parole board members tend to assign more conditions to individuals who pose a higher risk for recidivism.

Individuals who have missing IVVI scores still receive approximately 2.4 additional conditions. It is possible that parole board members are using other assessment information (e.g., DRAOR) to set these conditions or are not considering individual risk levels when setting conditions.

Figure 2. Average Number of Additional Conditions by IVVI Violence-Victimization Risk Category (N=3,068)

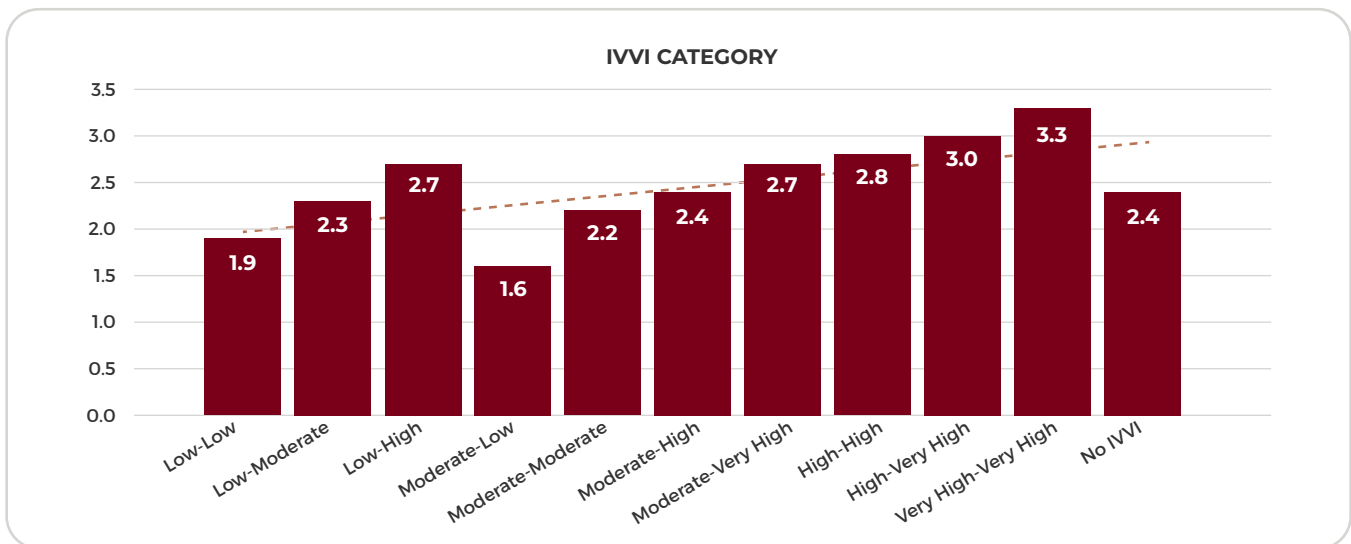
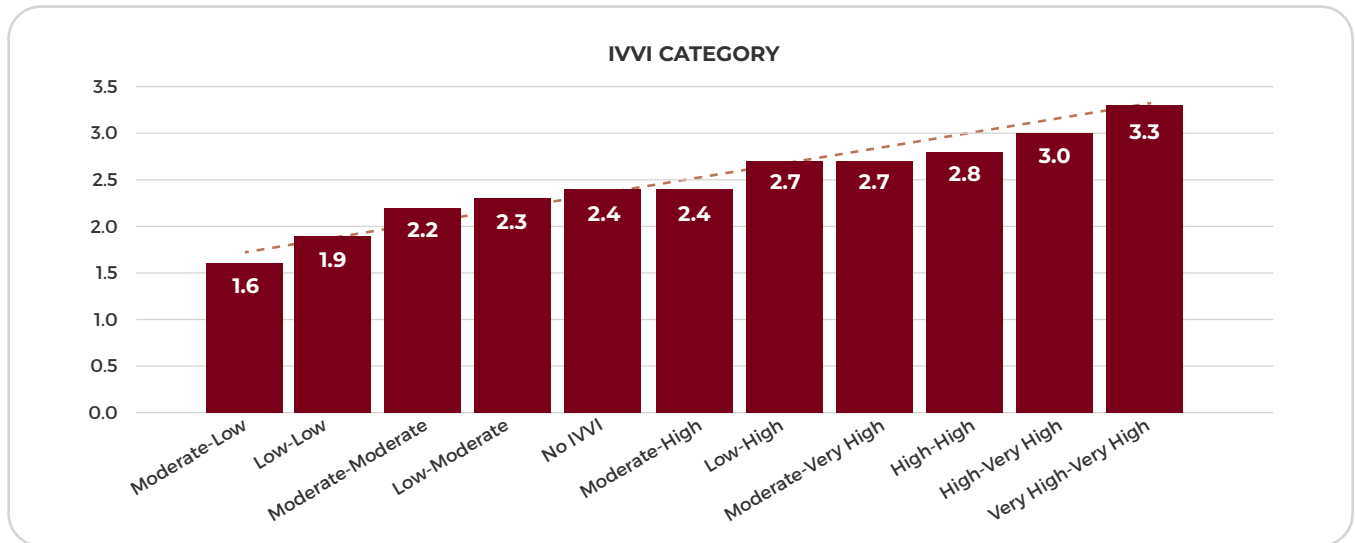


Figure 3 presents the scores above arranged sequentially, from the lowest to the highest number of additional conditions. The increase in the number of additional conditions corresponds more closely to the victimization score rather than the violence score. This suggests that when setting conditions, parole board members prioritize the future risk of a violent *and* property offense over the future risk of violence alone.

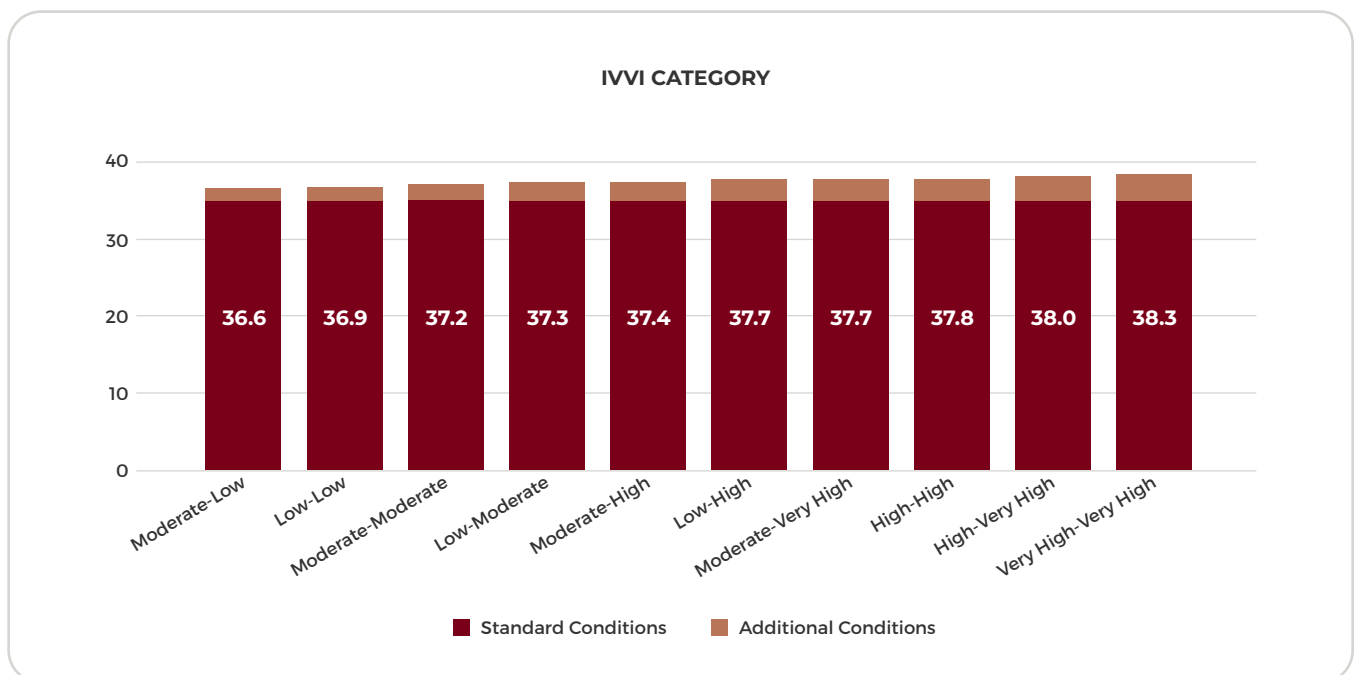
Figure 3. IVVI Violence-Victimization Risk Category Arranged by Average Number of Additional Conditions (N=3,068)



The Impact of Standard Conditions

Most of the conditions imposed on individuals upon release consist of thirty-five standard conditions that apply to everyone. When combined with additional conditions (Figure 4), the differences between the IVVI categories become minimal, obscuring the previously observed trend. Assigning a large number of standard conditions to everyone contradicts the RNR principles, as it fails to adequately reflect the variations in risk levels among individuals.

Figure 4. Average Number of Total Conditions by IVVI Score (N=3,068)



Alignment Between Needs and Conditions

Out of the 3,068 individuals in the sample, 1,230 underwent an institutional Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-entry (DRAOR) assessment. The institutional DRAOR, also known as the SDAC-21, is a case management tool used within prisons. It consists of risk/needs and protective factors distributed across three subscales: Stable Dynamic Risk Factors, Responsivity Factors, and Protective Factors. While the tool is validated to predict prison misconduct,⁹ it should not be used to gauge the risk of recidivism in the community. However, it does identify risk factors that may contribute to future criminal reoffending. The following section focuses on stable dynamic risk factors, which are criminogenic needs associated with the risk of reoffending and can be changed over time, albeit slowly. These risk factors are particularly relevant for targeting supervision conditions and should be taken into account by the parole board.

Individuals Not Assessed for Needs

Iowa's case management policy requires individuals scoring higher than Low-Low on the IVVI to undergo an institutional DRAOR assessment. In this sample, approximately 2,197 people, or roughly 72% of the sample, would have met the criteria for assessment. However, only 40% of the sample actually received an institutional DRAOR assessment before being released by the parole board. This indicates that a significant portion of individuals are being assigned conditions without domain-specific risk/needs information available. To enhance alignment between the RNR principles and conditions, it is important for the board to have access to both risk and needs information when setting conditions.

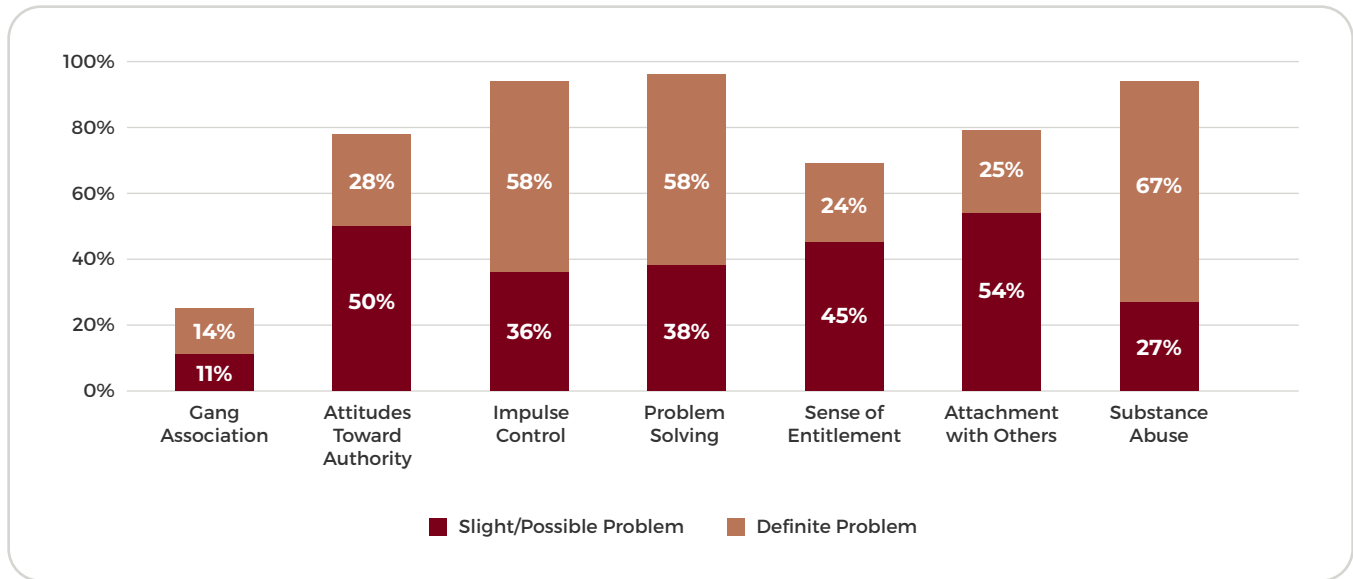
Approximately 81% of individuals who did not undergo an institutional DRAOR assessment were given a condition to participate in programming (condition 40A). It is unclear, based on the available information, what other factors influenced the assignment of this condition. However, in the absence of actuarial needs information, it would be more appropriate to assign an evaluation (i.e., substance abuse evaluation) rather than specific programming or treatment.

Needs Areas on the DRAOR

Out of the 1,230 individuals in our sample who underwent an institutional DRAOR assessment, the areas with the highest needs, that is, where most individuals displayed slight or definite problems, are impulse control, problem solving, and substance abuse (Figure 5). Notably, nearly two-thirds of the sample exhibited a definite problem with substance abuse. In accordance with RNR principles, individuals with definite needs in the area of substance abuse would benefit from targeted conditions related to substance abuse treatment or programming.

⁹ Smeth, A. (2019). *Validating the Structured Dynamic Assessment Case-Management 21-item (SDAC-21) in a Sample of Incarcerated Offenders*. Doctoral Thesis. <https://repository.library.carleton.ca/downloads/hd76s0919>.

Figure 5. Criminogenic Needs (Stable Dynamic Risk Factors) as Identified by the Institutional DRAOR (N=1,230)



Substance Abuse

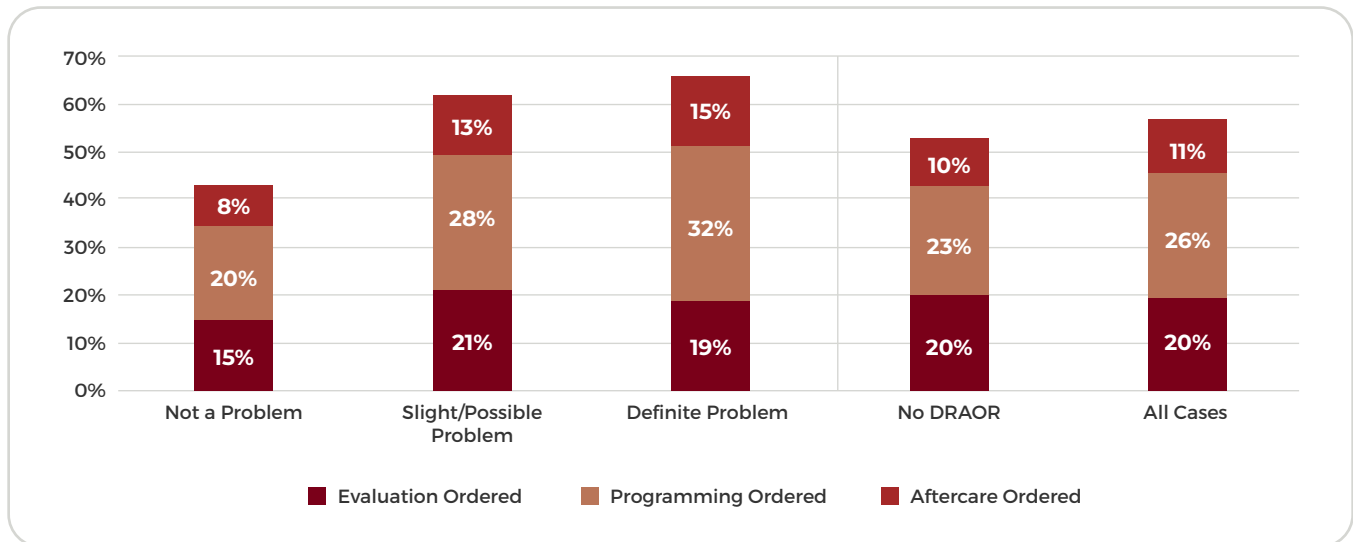
While 67% of the group displayed a definite need in the area of substance abuse (Figure 5), every individual in the sample received a condition restricting alcohol consumption and possession as part of their standard conditions (see Appendix A, condition 50).¹⁰ This led to a mismatch between needs and conditions for one-third of the sample. To align with the RNR principles, conditions that address specific criminogenic needs should be individually assigned. Individuals who show potential problems in specific areas could receive a condition for evaluation instead.

Figure 6 illustrates how often the parole board recommended substance abuse treatment, evaluation, or aftercare for individuals and how it aligned with their substance abuse needs. The board was more likely to order a substance abuse intervention—whether treatment, evaluation, or aftercare—for individuals with possible or definite needs in the area of substance abuse. Approximately 66% of those with definite needs and 62% of those with possible needs received some form of intervention, compared to 43% of those with no needs in that area. This suggests that the board sets the condition for substance abuse treatment based on individual needs, creating alignment between RNR and conditions.

However, 20% of individuals who were assessed as *not* having a substance abuse problem were still assigned substance abuse treatment, and 8% were given aftercare as a condition of parole. Similarly, 23% of individuals who did not receive a DRAOR assessment were assigned substance abuse programming. It is possible that other information included in the parole file or uncovered during the interview indicated that these individuals had substance abuse issues. However, in line with the RNR principles, it would be more appropriate to assign a substance abuse evaluation rather than treatment in cases where the DRAOR does not indicate definite needs.

¹⁰ This standard condition was removed in 2023 as a result of this project.

Figure 6. Parole Board Recommendations for Substance Abuse Intervention by Institutional DRAOR Evaluation of Substance Abuse Problems
(N w/ Evaluation=1,230; Total N=3,068)



Cognitive behavioral therapy is a specific type of treatment that has been shown to reduce recidivism when used in a community corrections setting.¹¹ It utilizes behavioral techniques to teach participants new thought patterns and new skills to deal with stressors that might arise. It has been shown to be effective in the treatment of impulsivity¹² and poor problem-solving skills.¹³

Impulse Control

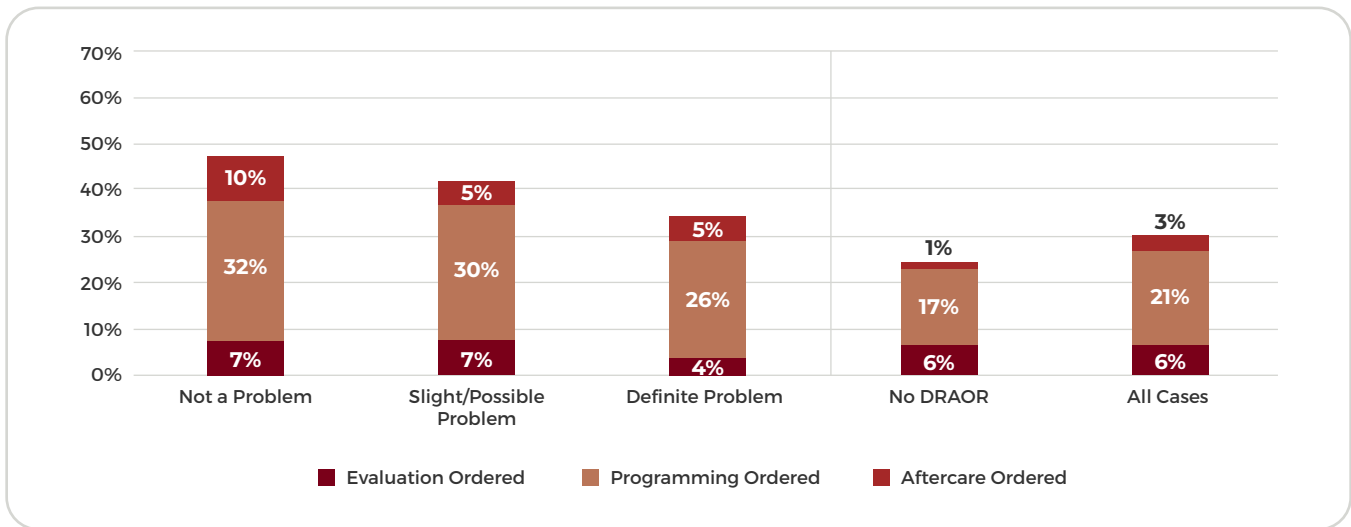
Individuals who show need in the impulse control domain often fail to consider the consequences of their behavior and thus would benefit from cognitive behavioral treatment. Figure 7 demonstrates that only 35% of individuals assessed as having a definite problem in the area of impulse control were given any form of cognitive intervention. In accordance with the RNR principles, individuals with definite needs in the area of impulse control should at least be given an evaluation intervention. While almost half (49%) of the individuals who show no problem in the area of impulse control received some sort of cognitive intervention (programming, evaluation, or aftercare), it is possible that these individuals received cognitive behavioral treatment for needs in other areas, such as problem solving or substance abuse.

11 See, e.g., Erin Harbinson, Julia Laskorunsky, and Kelly Lyn Mitchell, (2020), *Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Community Supervision*, Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice. https://robinainstitute.umn.edu/sites/robinainstitute.umn.edu/files/2022-02/cognitive_behavioral_therapy.pdf.

12 Smith T., Panfil K., Bailey C., & Kirkpatrick K. (2019). Cognitive and behavioral training interventions to promote self-control. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Learning and Cognition*; 45(3), 259-279.

13 Chen, S.-Y., Jordan, C., & Thompson, S. (2006). The Effect of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on Depression: The Role of Problem-Solving Appraisal. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 16(5), 500-51; Ugueto, A.M., Santucci, L.C., Krumholz, L.S. and Weisz, J.R. (2014). Problem-Solving Skills Training. In *Evidence-Based CBT for Anxiety and Depression in Children and Adolescents* (eds E.S. Sbrulati, H.J. Lyneham, C.A. Schniering and R.M. Rapee).

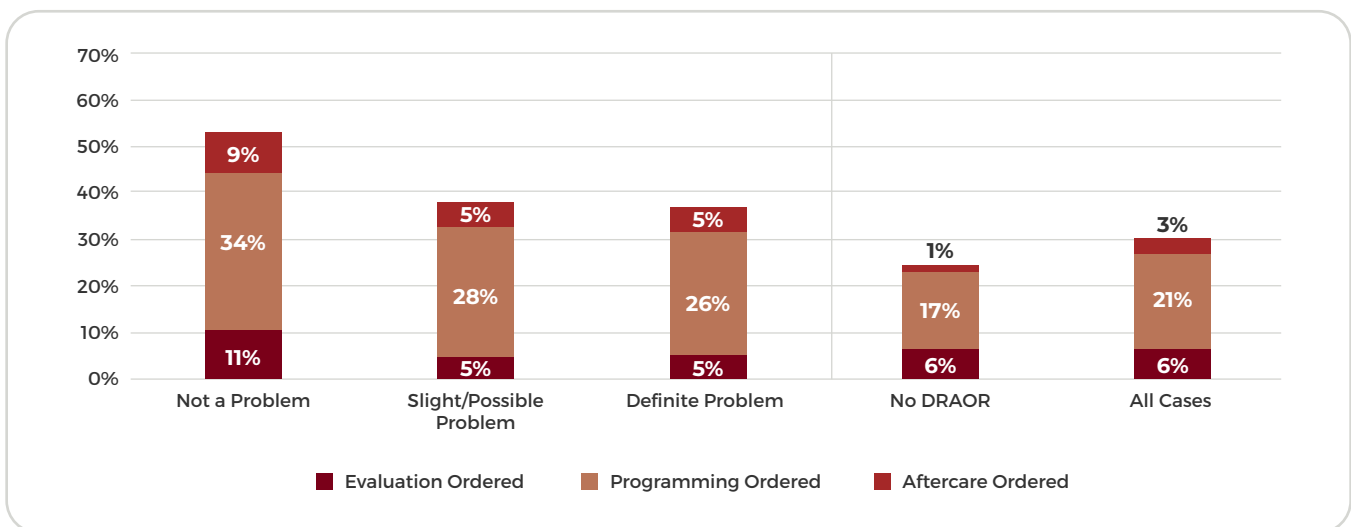
Figure 7. Parole Board Recommendations for Cognitive Intervention by DRAOR Evaluation of Impulse Control Problems (N w/ Evaluation=1,230; Total N=3,068)



Problem Solving

Individuals who lack problem solving skills are often unable to come up with appropriate solutions to their problems and thus would benefit from cognitive behavioral therapy. However, less than 40% of all individuals with possible or definite problems in the area of problem solving were given any kind of cognitive behavioral intervention. In line with the RNR principles, individuals with possible or definite needs in the area of problem solving should be assigned programming or an evaluation for further assessment.

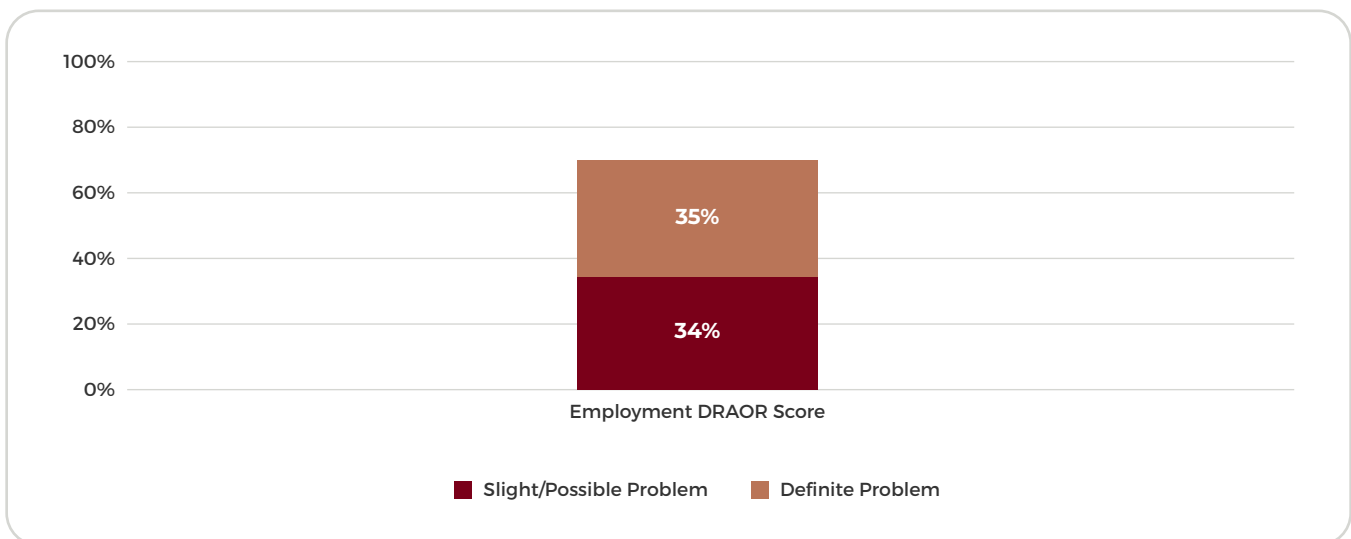
Figure 8. Parole Board Recommendations for Cognitive Treatment by DRAOR Evaluation of Problem Solving (N w/ Evaluation=1,230; Total N=3,068)



Employment

While the institutional DRAOR does not assess employment needs, we examined individuals who took the community DRAOR upon release (n=2,209). The results indicated that 69% of the individuals who underwent the community DRAOR displayed possible or definite problems with employment (Figure 9). However, with the current standard conditions, 100% of the group receives a condition to maintain employment. This condition is likely unnecessary for the 31% of the group that shows no need in this area. To adhere to RNR principles, conditions that target specific criminogenic needs should be individually assigned and offer assistance, rather than just directives.

Figure 9. Post-Release Employment DRAOR Scores and Assignment of the Employment Condition (N=2,209)



Assignment of Conditions

Table 1 shows that the most common additional conditions assigned are treatment or programming (94% of the sample), no victim contact (53%), and intensive parole supervision (25%). It is ideal to use the treatment or programming condition as a targeting condition to address individualized needs.

Table 1. Additional Conditions Assigned (May Overlap); N=3,068

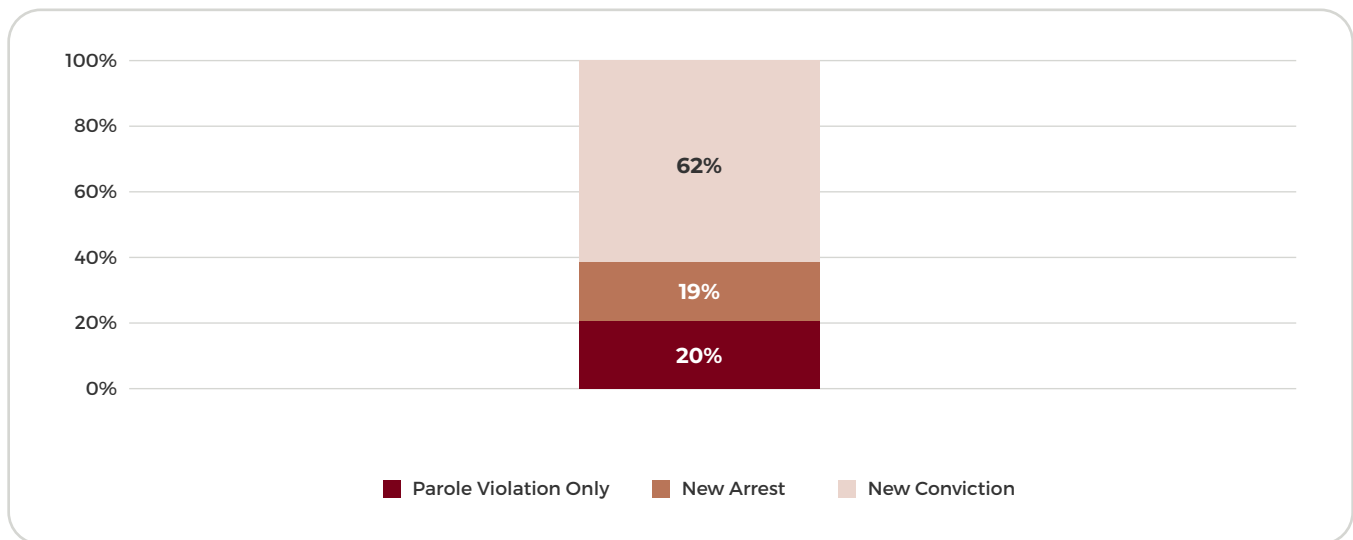
| Condition Code | Condition Description | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|---|-----------|---------|
| 10a | Must not be at specific location | 47 | 2% |
| 10b | Must reside at the Residential Correctional Facility | 298 | 10% |
| 10c | Must reside at specific location | 527 | 17% |
| 20a | Must participate in intensive parole supervision program | 771 | 25% |
| 20b | Cannot use internet | 77 | 3% |
| 20c | Must stay on parole until actual discharge date | 512 | 17% |
| 30a | Must not associate with specific person | 31 | 1% |
| 30b | Must not be in contact with victim or victim's family | 1640 | 53% |
| 30c | Must have no contact with any minor child | 5 | 0% |
| 30d | Must have no contact with any minor child unless approved | 149 | 5% |
| 30e | Must have no contact with individuals over 18 who cannot protect themselves | 2 | 0% |
| 30f | Must not be in contact with victim or victim's family with exception | 52 | 2% |
| 40a | Must complete treatment or programming | 2870 | 94% |
| 40b | Must complete community service | 191 | 6% |
| 70a | Must not apply for financial agreements without approval | 195 | 6% |

Violations and Revocations

We examined individuals on regular parole release between one year and ten months and two years and eight months after release (N=3,068). About 43% of individuals violated at least one condition of parole, and about one-fifth (n=601) had their supervision revoked.

Supervision conditions play a significant role in revocations. Figure 10 shows that 20% of those whose supervision was revoked were revoked for violating the condition(s) of their parole rather than new criminal behavior (arrest or new conviction). This highlights the importance of being thoughtful and careful when setting conditions, as violations alone can lead to revocations for a substantial portion of those released.

Figure 10. Reasons for Revocation (N=601)

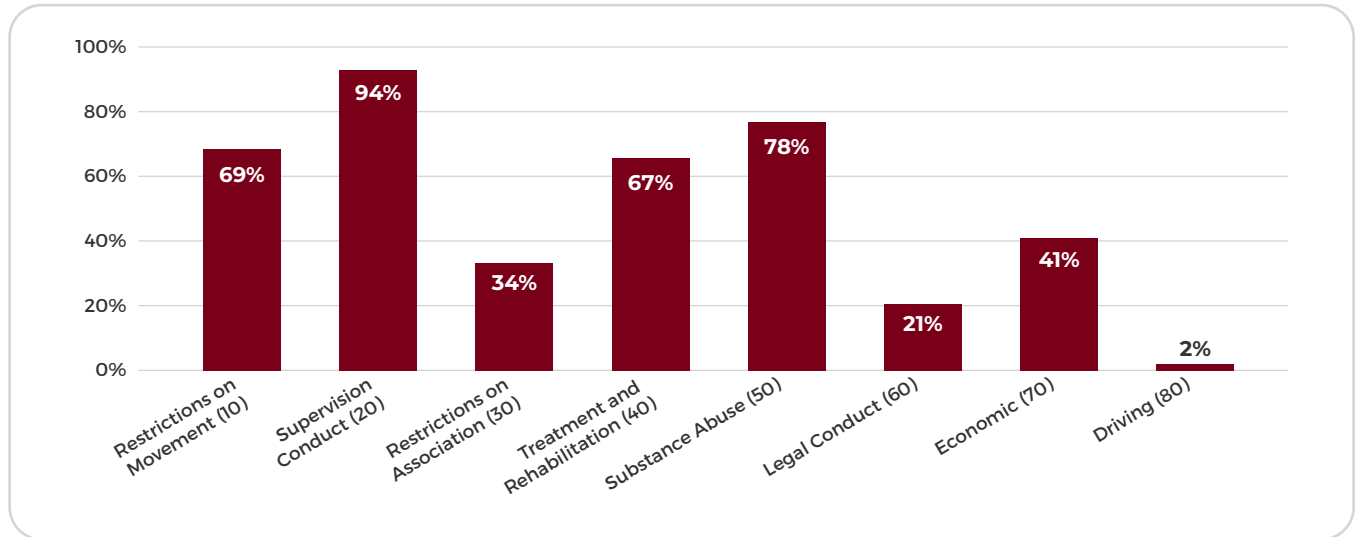


Technical Revocations

When individuals get revoked for a technical violation, it is usually due to violating multiple conditions. This makes it difficult to decipher which violation served as the primary catalyst for the revocation or whether it was due to a violation of a standard condition or an additional condition. In cases where there was a technical revocation (revocation for a violation of conditions), individuals were most likely to violate the conditions for supervision conduct, substance abuse, restrictions on movement, and the treatment condition (Figure 11). Each condition category includes numerous requirements, but the data is not fine-tuned enough to identify the specific behavior that led to the violation. For example, violating a condition for restrictions of movement could include multiple behaviors such as breaking curfew, leaving the county without notice, or leaving a residential facility. Violating the substance abuse condition generally means failing a drug test, although it could mean drinking or possessing alcohol. Generally, individuals violate the treatment condition for not attending treatment or programming, although this condition also includes a long list of prohibited behaviors, such as being unemployed or not completing community service.

It should be noted that Iowa law indicates that a violation of any condition has the potential to result in a revocation.¹⁴ As proof of concept, *all* categories of conditions appear on this chart, indicating that all the conditions have in fact led to revocations.

¹⁴ Iowa Code § 205—11.4(908) Revocation of parole. (2019).

Figure 11.15 Condition Categories Violated for Technical Revocations (N=98)

15 21 out of 119 technical revocations have no violation categories listed and were omitted from this figure.

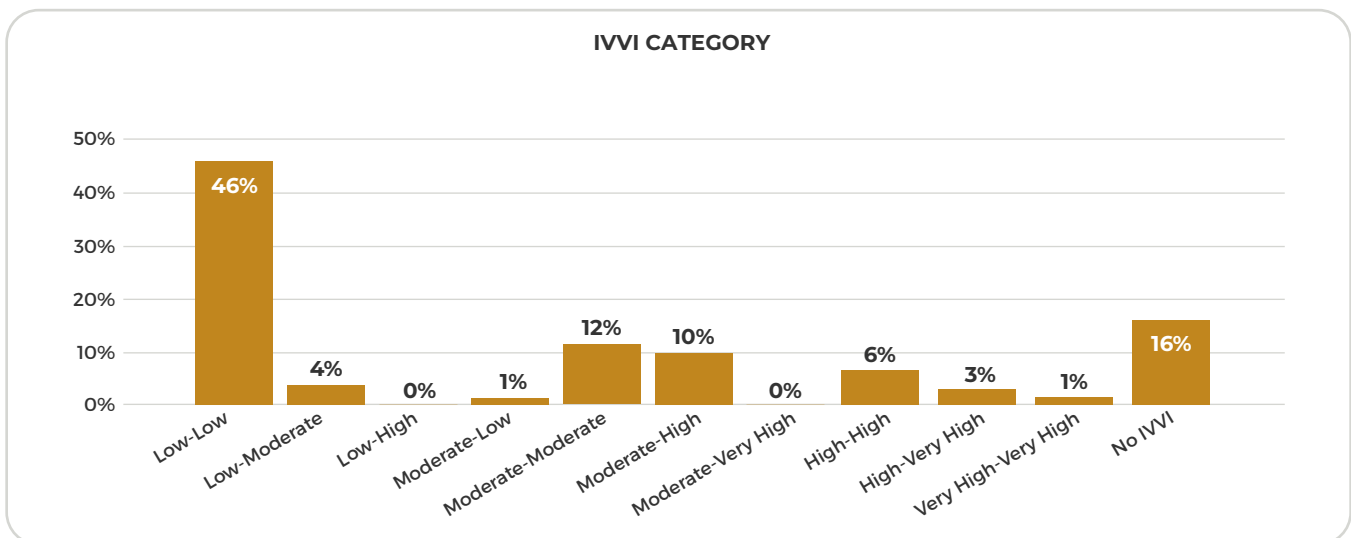
Part II: Special Sentence Parole Sample

Alignment Between Risk Level and Assigned Conditions

Individuals who are released on special sentence parole—that is, individuals who are released following serving prison time for a sexual offense—have different needs and are generally assigned a different combination of conditions than individuals released on regular parole.

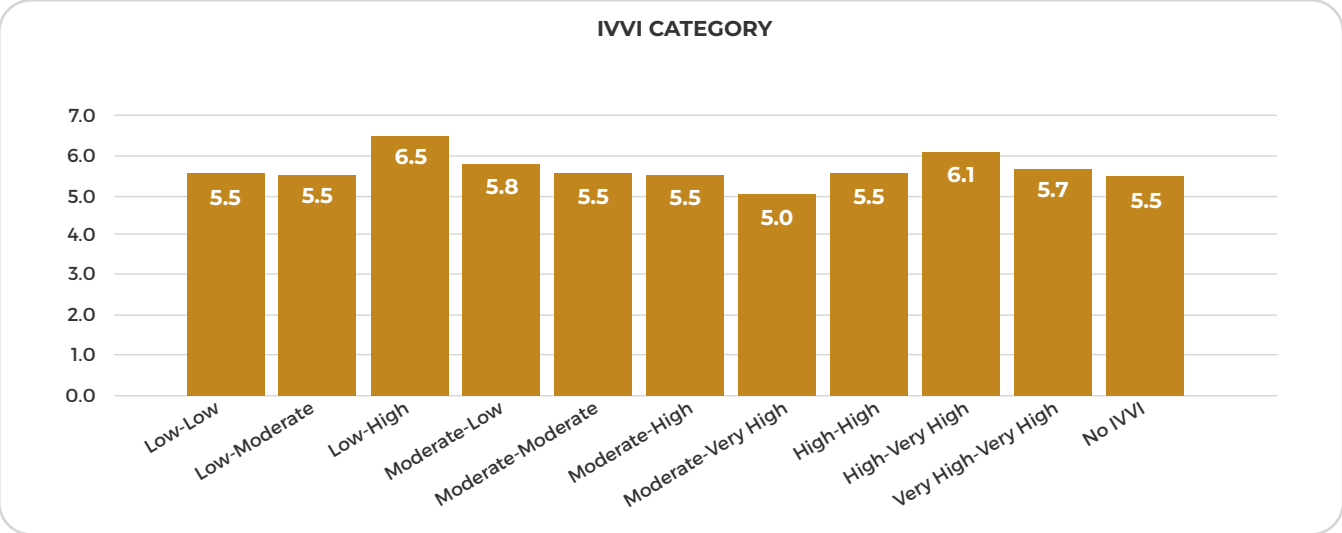
In Iowa, the IVVI assessment is used to predict new offenses for sex offenders only if they have also committed other (i.e. non-sexual) offenses. In our sample, 84% of the special parole group had an IVVI score. Figure 12 illustrates the distribution of individuals in the special parole sample (N=417) across the Iowa Violence and Victimization Instrument (IVVI) categories. Nearly half (46%) of the sample falls into the Low Violence-Low Victimization category, indicating a low risk of recidivism. It is noteworthy that individuals on special parole are approximately twice as likely to belong to the lowest risk category compared to those in the regular parole sample.

Figure 12. Percentage of Individuals with Each Violence-Victimization Risk Score (N=417 Special Parole)



In the special parole group, individuals receive an average of 5.6 additional conditions, more than twice the number assigned to individuals in the regular parole group. Figure 13 also reveals that the allocation of additional conditions does not align with the risk level. Individuals in lower-risk categories receive a similar number of additional conditions as those in higher-risk categories. It should be noted that the special parole group also undergoes the ISORA and the Static-99-R risk assessments, which provide risk information about repeat sex and violent offending. It is possible there is more alignment between the risk levels on these two risk assessment and assigned conditions - however, we did not analyze ISORA/Static-99-R data for this study. Individuals convicted of sex offenses do not undergo the DRAOR assessment for criminogenic needs.

Figure 13. Average Number of Additional Conditions Arranged by IVVI Violence-Victim Risk Category (N=417 Special Parole)



Assignment of Conditions

Table 2 highlights the most common conditions assigned to individuals released on special parole. The majority of these individuals receive conditions for intensive parole supervision (20a), no early discharge from parole (20c), no victim contact (30b), and treatment or programming (40a). Additionally, nearly 80% of them receive a condition to avoid contact with minors (30d).

Table 2. Additional Conditions Assigned (May Overlap); N=417 Special Parole

| Condition Code | Condition Description | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|---|-----------|---------|
| 10a | Must not be at specific location | 0 | 0% |
| 10b | Must reside at the Residential Correctional Facility | 157 | 38% |
| 10c | Must reside at specific location | 6 | 1% |
| 20a | Must participate in intensive parole supervision program | 412 | 99% |
| 20b | Cannot use internet | 138 | 33% |
| 20c | Must stay on parole until actual discharge date | 408 | 98% |
| 30a | Must not associate with specific person | 1 | 0% |
| 30b | Must not be in contact with victim or victim's family | 403 | 97% |
| 30c | Must have no contact with any minor child | 17 | 4% |
| 30d | Must have no contact with any minor child unless approved | 328 | 79% |
| 30e | Must have no contact with individuals over 18 who cannot protect themselves | 8 | 2% |
| 30f | Must not be in contact with victim or victim's family with exception | 23 | 6% |
| 40a | Must complete treatment or programming | 413 | 99% |
| 40b | Must complete community service | 1 | 0% |
| 70a | Must not apply for financial agreements without approval | 2 | 0% |

Violations and Revocations

Within the follow-up period, approximately 36% of individuals in the special parole group violated at least one condition, and one-fifth of them had their parole supervision revoked. It is interesting to note that the percentage of individuals revoked is the same between the special parole group and the regular parole group.

Technical Revocations

Among individuals who were revoked in the special parole group, 58% were revoked due to new criminal behavior, such as arrest or conviction (Figure 14). However, 42% were revoked for technical parole violation alone. It is note-worthy that individuals in the special parole group receive more additional conditions, as well as more revocations due to parole condition violations compared to the regular parole group (20% [Figure 11]).

Figure 14. Reasons for Revocation (N=81 Special Parole)

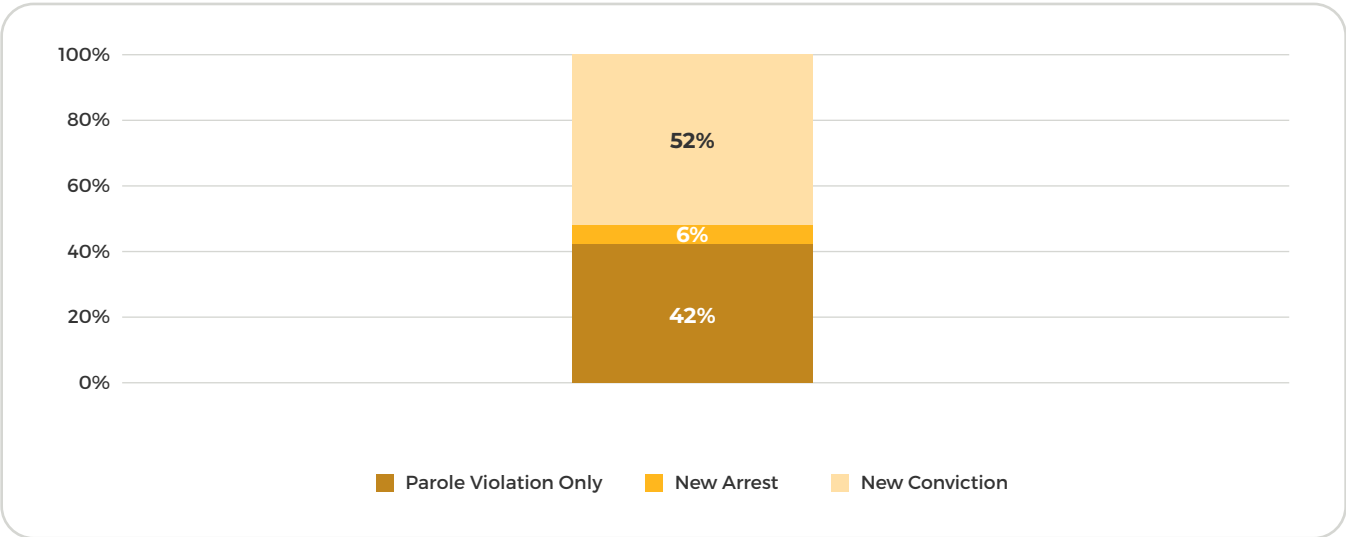
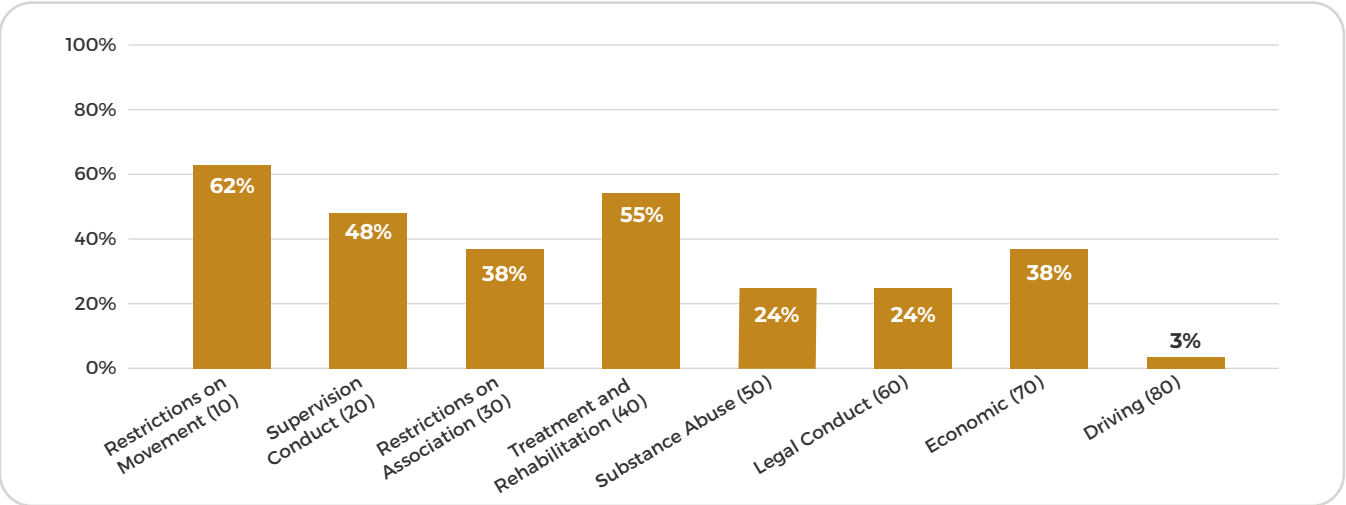


Figure 15 indicates that individuals who were revoked for technical violations alone (n=27) were primarily revoked for violating conditions related to restrictions of movement, treatment and programming, and supervision conduct.

Figure 15.¹⁶ Condition Categories Violated for Technical Revocations (N=27 Special Parole)



¹⁶ 7 out of 34 of technical revocations have no violation categories listed and were omitted from this figure.

Recommendations for Policy Changes

This memo examines the alignment between supervision conditions and risk and need factors in Iowa parole. The study analyzed data from individuals released on regular parole and special sentence parole. The goal was to evaluate whether condition setting in Iowa reflected a Robina-developed model for setting conditions with Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) principles, which includes incorporating risk level and using conditions to target criminogenic needs.¹⁷ Although we identified some gaps in alignment, specific policy modifications can enhance compliance and improve outcomes. These recommendations were presented to the Iowa Board of Parole during the course of our work together.

Minimize Standard Conditions

The analysis shows that, in line with RNR principles, the number of additional conditions decreases as risk level decreases for the regular parole group. However, standard conditions, composed of thirty-five individual requirements in Iowa, are indiscriminately applied to all parolees irrespective of their risk levels. These make up the bulk of all conditions given. These conditions fail to account for the variation in risk and needs among individuals and seldom offer targeted support for behavioral change. To improve alignment, we recommend reducing the number of standard conditions to those essential for compliance, supplementing with additional conditions as required based on individual risk and needs profiles.

Utilize Evidence-Based Approaches to Address Needs

There was a lack of alignment between conditions and needs in certain areas, such as substance abuse, impulse control, problem-solving skills, and employment. To best align condition setting with RNR principles, interventions should be grounded in evidence and directly correspond to the identified needs. For instance, a sizeable portion of individuals who did not show needs in the area of substance abuse received a condition for substance abuse treatment. Additionally, all parolees faced an alcohol restriction condition regardless of their needs,¹⁸ meaning that for some, this was an unnecessary restriction without corresponding benefits. On the other hand, cognitive behavioral therapy, shown to reduce reoffending risk,¹⁹ was underutilized for people showing needs in the impulse control and problem-solving skills domains. We recommend tailoring conditions to address criminogenic needs adequately to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. If there is case information present that stands in contrast to the needs assessment, it would be more appropriate to assign an evaluation rather than treatment.

Revise Employment Condition to Address Barriers

The current requirement for all supervisees to maintain employment, irrespective of their employment-related needs, does not align with RNR principles. Not only is it given to everyone regardless of risk or need, it also does

17 Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice. (2023). *Policy Brief: Aligning Supervision Conditions with the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Framework*.

18 As a result of this project, the condition to avoid alcohol consumption and possession was removed from Iowa's standard conditions in 2023.

19 See, e.g., Erin Harbinson, Julia Laskorunsky, and Kelly Lyn Mitchell, *Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Community Supervision*, Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice (2020), https://robinainstitute.umn.edu/sites/robinainstitute.umn.edu/files/2022-02/cognitive_behavioral_therapy.pdf.

not effectively target the employment need area. Individuals facing employment issues often contend with underlying barriers like mental health problems, transportation issues, or substance abuse. Moreover, they may have pro-criminal attitudes or antisocial behavior that makes obtaining and retaining employment difficult and may benefit by first addressing these barriers through cognitive behavioral therapy. Thus, removing this condition from the standard conditions and revising it to address employment-related barriers through programming or treatment is recommended.²⁰

Ensure Access to Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The study revealed that information from needs assessment is often unavailable at the condition-setting stage, hindering the ability to assign conditions that address specific criminogenic needs. Although 72% of the regular parole group should have had a needs assessment according to Iowa's policies, only 40% received it. For those without an assessment, parole board members are left to assign programming or treatment based on other information, like offense type. A policy directive should require comprehensive needs information at the condition setting stage for all individuals. However, when an assessment is lacking, but other case information suggests criminogenic needs, parole board members could assign an evaluation for specific treatment or programming.

Keep Conditions to the Minimum Necessary for Compliance and Rehabilitation

Research in community supervision suggests that the conditions imposed on those in re-entry can unintentionally serve as tripwires, resulting in re-incarceration even for minor infractions.²¹ Our findings echo this, revealing that a significant share of revocations stemmed from technical violations, not new criminal offenses. The conditions violated were wide-ranging, indicating a spectrum of behaviors that triggered revocation. In addition, excessive supervision conditions can act as barriers to successful reintegration, making it difficult for parolees to maintain employment, stable housing, and comply with other requirements.²² This is not a case where a “more is better” approach to supervision leads to better outcomes.

It is essential to recognize that revocations, even for technical violations alone, can be appropriate responses to specific situations. However, they should be thoughtfully crafted to address specific risk and needs. Otherwise, low-value conditions may simply serve as potential pitfalls for re-incarceration. In line with RNR principles, we recommend that conditions should be judiciously imposed, minimized to the bare essentials required for ensuring public safety and supervision compliance.

Special consideration should be given to the special sentence parole group, who despite a lower risk of recidivism, received more additional conditions than the regular parole group. In addition, the number of special conditions they received did not decrease with risk level. This group was less likely to be revoked for a new crime, but much more likely to be revoked for a technical revocation within the first few years or release. Many conditions, including mandatory participation in sex offender treatment or restricted early release from parole, are legislatively mandated, limiting the parole board's flexibility. We recommend that policymakers critically evaluate the conditions for this group to determine if all the statutorily mandated conditions contribute to public safety and assist with rehabilitation. This is particularly important because these individuals serve extended sentences of supervision, sometimes lasting a lifetime.

20 In 2023, as a result of this project, the Iowa parole board changed the wording of this standard condition from mandating employment to working with a PO to address barriers to employment.

21 Miriam Krinsky and Monica Fuhrmann, *Building a Fair and Just Federal Community Supervision System: Lessons Learned from State and Local Reforms*, 34 Federal Sentencing R. 340, 341-42 (2022).

22 The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2020). *Policy Reforms Can Strengthen Community Supervision. A framework to improve probation and parole.* <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2020/04/policy-reforms-can-strengthen-community-supervision>.

Changes to Conditions in 2023

In 2022, we worked with the Iowa Board of Parole to determine how well their condition process aligned with RNR principles. We analyzed administrative data, interviewed individuals involved in the condition setting process, and presented our recommendations for changes to the Board. In 2023, partially as a result of our work together, the Iowa Board of Parole made a number of changes to the wording and organization of its standard and special conditions. Key changes include:

1. Redefining the Employment Condition

The standard employment condition was modified to focus on addressing barriers to employment with a parole officer's assistance. For those where employment isn't feasible, engagement in pro-social activities is now an alternative.

2. Alcohol Use Restriction

Previously a standard condition, the alcohol restriction was shifted to special conditions. This change allows for more targeting, applying to individuals with serious substance abuse issues, while offering flexibility for other clients in social or work environments involving alcohol.

3. Bank Account Opening Permission

This condition, initially standard, is now a special condition aimed at those at high risk for financial crimes.

4. Internet Use Restrictions

The special condition restricting internet use to job searches only was expanded to allow individuals to use the internet to look for housing, treatment, counseling, as well as other activities approved by the PO.

5. Travel Restrictions Adjusted

The requirement has been relaxed from needing permission to leave the county to needing it for out-of-state travel, reducing the burden for those working or having family in different counties.

Removed Conditions:

- Requirement for permission to obtain a driver's license.
- Restriction on associating with anyone with a criminal history, easing concerns for parolees interacting with certain family members or coworkers.
- Requirement to pay fees related to their court case or parole supervision. Individuals on parole are still required to pay these fees, but it is no longer a revocable offense.

Conclusion

The premise of the ASCRN project is that by aligning supervision conditions with risk and needs factors, community supervision can better support successful rehabilitation, reduce revocations, and contribute to improved public safety outcomes. The study revealed several areas of misalignment between risk and needs factors and the conditions imposed on individuals on parole in Iowa and offered policy recommendations to address them. In 2023, the Iowa Board of Parole made a number of critical changes to their conditions, such as removing low-value conditions that did not assist with public safety and rehabilitation and moving conditions targeting criminogenic needs from the standard conditions to special conditions. We urge Iowa practitioners and policymakers to evaluate these interventions to determine whether enhanced alignment results in better outcomes for individuals on parole.

It is also imperative to note that these recommendations represent only the starting point. Further research is necessary to continue refining our understanding of the intricate relationship between condition setting, compliance, and recidivism. Deeper insights into how individual characteristics interact with supervision conditions could enhance our ability to devise conditions that are both fair and effective. As states continue to prioritize reducing prison populations, improving outcomes for people on parole supervision will remain a critical area for sustained research and policy efforts.

Appendix A – Iowa Parole Conditions

The Iowa parole conditions start on the next page. The conditions are divided into eight topic areas.

The standard conditions are in the main numbered paragraphs (i.e., 40) and special conditions are located beneath those numbered paragraphs (i.e., 40a). The eight areas that are considered standard conditions encompass thirty-five individual requirements. There are also sixteen special conditions available to the Parole Board. The community-based conditions located at the end of the document are imposed by parole officers. It should be noted that these conditions were revised in 2023 as part of the ASCRN project. The quantitative analysis in this report is based on the conditions below.

Highlighted = Conditions can be amended by Community Based Corrections (CBC)

Updated July 18, 2019

Red text = Require Board approval

Green text = Condition can be added by the Board before release or by an Administrative Law Judge only if already in the community, can be amended or removed by CBC

BOARD OF PAROLE CONDITIONS:

10: Restrictions on Movement

I shall report immediately to the supervising officer in the Judicial District designated to my parole instructions. I will reside at the place designated in my parole instructions and shall not change residence unless I receive prior approval from the supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee. I will obey any curfew restrictions placed upon me by supervising officer. I shall not leave the county of my residence unless I receive prior permission to travel from my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

10a. I shall not be at (specific location information) unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

10b. I will reside at the Residential Correctional Facility until discharged by the Residential Manager and/or my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee. I shall obey all of the rules and regulations of the Residential Correctional Facility.

10c. I will reside at (specific location information) until my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee approves another place of residence.

20: Supervision Conduct

I shall maintain contact with my supervising officer as directed and shall not lie to, mislead, or misinform my supervising officer either by statement or omission of information. I shall use my true name in all dealings. I shall follow all conditions that can and may be placed on my parole by the Board of Parole and any additional conditions that can be added by my supervising officer at any time during my supervision.

20a. I shall participate in intensive parole supervision program unless my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee determines otherwise.

20b. I shall not use the internet or other forms of electronic social media for anything other than job searches, unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

20c. I understand that I will be on parole supervision until the actual date of the discharge of the sentence(s) for which I am on supervision and that I will not be discharged early from supervision unless this condition is, otherwise, amended by the Board of Parole.

30: Restrictions on Association

I shall not associate with any person having a criminal record, currently under supervision or any person known or suspected to be engaged in criminal activity, unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee. I shall treat all persons with respect and courtesy and refrain from assaultive, intimidating, or threatening verbal or physical abuse. I shall have no direct or indirect contact or communication with any victim or the family of any victim of my offense(s), unless contact or communication with any victim or the family of any victim is authorized by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

30a. I shall not associate with (name of person) unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

30b. I shall have no direct or indirect contact or communication with any victim or the family of any victim of my offense(s).

30c. I shall have no contact with any minor child - direct or indirect. I shall not work, reside, establish contact with or join any group or organization that deals with minors.

30d. I shall have no contact with any minor child, direct or indirect, unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee. I shall not work, reside, establish contact with or join any group or organization that deals with minors unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

30e. I shall not initiate, establish or maintain contact with any person eighteen years of age or older who is unable to protect their own interests or unable to adequately perform or obtain services necessary to meet essential human needs, unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

30f. I shall have no direct or indirect contact or communication with any victim or the family of any victim of my offense(s) with the exception of the following named individuals: (name of person)

Note: The victim's family includes spouse, child, mother, father, siblings, step-parents, step-children, step-siblings, and/or any legal guardian, aunts and uncles as well as their children (1st cousins to victim) and grandparents.

40: Treatment, Rehabilitation & Other Programming

I shall participate and cooperate with any treatment, rehabilitation, or monitoring programs; including any electronic monitoring required by the supervising officer in the District I am being supervised in. I shall seek mental health services as appropriate. I shall submit a DNA sample if requested by my supervising officer or other law enforcement official. If needed, I shall continue to work toward attaining my GED or complete the requirements for a high school diploma. I shall schedule and keep all appointments necessary for the successful completion of programs and services in which I am participating and for the successful completion of my parole supervision. I shall sign any release or waiver requested by my parole officer to authorize my parole officer to receive and access any information relating to any treatment program or otherwise as requested by my parole officer.

40a. I shall complete sex offender treatment program and sex offender aftercare treatment program unless my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee determines otherwise.

40b. I shall complete (number) hours of community service as ordered by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.

50: Substance Abuse

I shall not use, purchase, or possess alcoholic beverages and shall submit to alcohol tests and drug tests when directed by my supervising officer. I shall not enter taverns or liquor stores or other establishments where the primary activity is the sale of alcoholic beverages. I will not use, ingest, inject, huff, possess or smoke any illegal or synthetic substances. I shall not use, purchase, possess or transfer any drugs unless prescribed to me by a physician.

60: Legal Conduct

I shall obey all laws and ordinances. I shall notify a parole officer within 24 hours if I am arrested, receive a citation or if I have any contact with law enforcement. I shall not own, possess, use or transport firearms, dangerous weapons, or imitations thereof, unless approved by my supervising officer. I will submit my person, property, place of residence, vehicle, and personal effects to search at any time, with or without a search warrant, warrant of arrest or reasonable cause by any parole officer. I waive extradition to the State of Iowa from any jurisdiction in or outside the United States (including Indian Reservation or Indian Trust Land) and also agree that I will not contest any effort by any jurisdiction to return me to the State of Iowa.

70: Economic

I shall pay restitution, court costs, and attorney fees as directed by the court. I shall pay any fees associated with programs and services ordered by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee during the course of my supervision. I will comply with all the terms of my restitution plan. I will pay to the supervising District Department of Correctional Services an enrollment fee to offset the cost of my supervision as provided in the Iowa Code. I will pay this fee upon such terms as my supervising officer directs. I understand that I may not be discharged from parole until all fees are paid. I shall secure and maintain employment as directed by my supervising officer. I shall notify my supervising officer within twenty-four (24) hours if my employment is terminated. I shall seek employment if I am unemployed and shall report my efforts to find employment as directed by my supervising officer.

70a. I shall not apply for a checking account, credit card, student loan, or any other financial agreement without the approval of my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee. Nor will I work for any financial institution.

80: Driving

I shall not operate a motor vehicle upon the public roads and highways unless I have a current, valid driver's license and insurance. If my driving privileges were suspended, revoked or barred, and now have been reinstated by the Department of Transportation, I must receive approval from my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee prior to getting my driver's license.

COMMUNITY BASED PAROLE CONDITIONS:

11. I shall not be at (location information) unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.
12. I will reside at (location information) until my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee approves another place of residence.
13. I shall be at my residence between (start/end time).
22. I shall not use the internet or other forms of electronic social media for anything other than job searches, unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's Designee.
23. I am required to follow the instructions of my signed Work Release Day Reporting agreement. If I incur violations, they will fall under the parole revocation process. I understand violations could result in a Report of Violation being filed with the Iowa Board of Parole. This may result in my being held in jail/prison pending the outcome of a Revocation Hearing held by the Administrative Law Judge.
31. I shall not associate with (name of person) unless approved by my supervising District Director or Director's Designee.
32. I shall have no contact with any minor child, direct or indirect. I shall not work, reside, establish contact with or join any group or organization that deals with minors unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's Designee.
33. I shall not initiate, establish or maintain contact with any person eighteen years of age or older who is unable to protect their own interests or unable to adequately perform or obtain services necessary to meet essential human needs, unless approved by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.
41. I shall successfully complete (type) treatment program unless my supervising Judicial District Director, Director's designee determines otherwise.
42. I shall complete (number) hours of community service as ordered by my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee.
71. I shall not apply for a checking account, credit card, student loan, or any other financial agreement without the approval of my supervising Judicial District Director or Director's designee. Nor will I work for any financial institution.



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